

Seven Nine Eleven by princessbinas

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Summary: Eleven is thrust into a new world and everything turns upside down... For the worst... Post-Season One and Pre-Season Two of Stranger Things; During the Search for Tsunade Arc.

1. Chapter One: The Pinwheel

Binas: Hello. Long time, no see. This is story just had to be made. It will be the first Naruto-Stranger Things crossover and I will make sure that it will set the bar for high quality! I want to make it a pure splash of goodness!

I have a few other chapters on the press. They will be published when I get to doing so. That way, you guys don't have to wait like you have been for my other stories. I blame my ADHD... It's really bad...

The title has multiple references. One being Team Seven, the Nine Tails, and Eleven in order. It is also counting up by odd numbers.

Chapter One: The Pinwheel

The sound of small, soiled and slimed, once-white, high-top tennis shoes tapped along the aged dirt path with every step Eleven took. Her tired feet shuffled forward as her legs and feet cramped from being pushed to the brink.

She had been walking and trying to survive for days in this bizarre place. She remembered pulverizing the Demogorgon into floating particles, and it retaliated by doing something similar to her along with its ability to make gates with ease. It was horrifying. Losing all of her senses and awareness for a time and then waking up somewhere that was not with Mike by herself was terrifying. She felt so alone and had no idea what to do other than robotically push forward in hopes of surviving.

Everything, despite the peaceful appearance, felt alien and unsettling no matter how familiar it tried to be. She could sense the foreign energy all around her dance from the flora and fauna around her. It made her jump at every moment that she relaxed just the slightest. It brushed against her mental senses in a way that made her flinch every time she tried to reach out to Mike with her mind. Without a bath to enhance her powers, she knew she needed to find a way to

just even hear Mike for a mere second. The energy around her just seemed to wish to prevent that. She wanted Mike. She wanted her friends. The ones who took her in and kept her safe from Papa and the bad men.

Eleven felt her chest tighten. Her dirt-and-slime-crusted hand traveled to where her heart was and held it. The sensation made her eyes tear up. It felt like the feeling she had when Papa had found her and tried to take her away. This thought sent silent whimpers out of her mouth and she wanted the pain that swelled inside her to stop. She could not bear it nor push it away. It pinned her down like how the Demogorgon pinned down its next meal to keep it from fighting back. It made her feel helpless. It frightened her with how it grabbed a hold of her and refused to let go. The pain in her chest felt like it was killing her.

Her body trembled with weakness as her stomach yelled at her, demanding for something to sate its emptiness. Her eyes looked around her, and all she could see were medium-length grass, some trees, and tiny birds that would not be enough to make the hunger go away.

Feeling as if she had no choice, she grabbed a fist full of grass put it into her mouth. She chewed for a moment just to be hit by the bitter flavor of the greens and the disgusting taste of dirt. Reluctantly, she swallowed with a grimace. She was not going to do that again. After all, on top of the taste, it did little to fill her stomach.

Eleven pressed forward, using every drop of will power she possessed to keep from collapsing from exhaustion and hunger. Eventually this all paid off when she saw the beginnings of a town. She forwent sneaking around and entered the town and used whatever she could grab at any point to stabilize her balance. Some of the things she leaned on were baskets, barrels, and crates, all of which held nothing of use to her at the moment.

All around Eleven, people walked about, going about with what they were doing. No one paid any mind to her, which relieved Eleven immensely. She could not afford being spotted by Papa's bad men. Even without Papa, she had a feeling that the bad men would continue what he had started. They would lock her away in the bad

place and isolate her from those who cared about her. They would force her to complete more tasks such as spying on Commies or worse, command her to use her to create more gates. She did not want to create anymore of them. One was bad enough to spawn multiple gates. Creating more than what was already there would be worse than bad. Mike had said that she was not the monster, but she now knew that the bad men would turn her into one if they had their way.

Soon enough, Eleven came across a small cubical. It had food. She did not recognize the foodstuff present, but it smelled good. Some had a sweet aroma that reminded her of Eggos drenched in maple syrup. The food that smelled like Eggos was what she went for without any restraint nor hesitation. Her shaky but nimble hands quickly snagged a handful of the syrup-covered balls on sticks that smelled like Eggos. She instantly began devouring the sweet-tasting food while pocketing a couple completely in the deep pockets of the plaid jacket Hopper had given her prior to leaving the school. The sweet balls did not taste like Eggos, but they were still delicious.

By the time Eleven finished her third stick and began the fourth, someone grabbed her by the wrist with a great amount of force. It was a woman, and she was angry. She remembered Benny and how he got angry at her for stealing and then eating the flimsy, salty yellow sticks. This situation was like it, only this time, the woman did not look like she cared.

"Young lady, you better pay for those!" the woman snapped.

Eleven did not respond right away. Her eyes filled with fear. Her eventual response was a weak, "Pay?"

"Yes," the woman stated harshly. "Those four dango you stole and ate costs 650 Ryo a piece."

Eleven still did not understand. She had no idea what ryo was or what the woman was insisting that she do. The shaven girl quaked in place as tears pricked her eyes. She would have used her powers to break free, but she felt too weak for it to make a difference. This woman was not nice. Benny, despite not understanding what was going on, knew she was in need of help until Papa had him killed.

"Well?" the woman said as she shook Eleven's wrist. "Are you going to cough up the money or do I need to call for security?"

"Actually, that won't be necessary."

The woman and Eleven faced the direction that the voice came from. It came from a man with white hair, just like Papa's, but it was longer and spikier than she had ever seen on anyone. On his face was a smile of sorts, and Eleven could not really pinpoint it.

"Is this your child?" the woman asked.

"No, but here," the white haired man said as he handed a small stack of rectangular paper, giving a wink that made the woman a bit uncomfortable. "This should be enough for the dango she snacked on."

"Thank you," the woman said before turning her attention back to Eleven. "You're lucky this time, young lady."

The woman threw Eleven's wrist back, making the little girl stagger back. Eleven rubbed the wrist the woman had grabbed, trying to ease the pain. The woman gave her one last glare before going back to what she was doing.

Eleven looked around and saw the man had left. She looked around and spotted him heading back to a blonde boy dressed in almost all orange. He looked like he was saying something to the white haired man but could not tell what. As soon as the two began heading off, Eleven tailed them from behind, doing her best to keep up.

Thankfully, Eleven did not have to exert herself too much. The pair entered a large building. It was not as tall as the place she came from, but the building still looked daunting with its sheer height.

She pushed the door open with her hands and watched as the white haired man wrote something on a sheet of paper for the person behind the counter.

Next to the white haired man was the blonde boy. The boy held an excited flare in his eyes and a large smile. Something about him made her feel warm. It was like the warmth that just being around

Lucas, Dustin, and, to an even greater amount, Mike gave her.

A second later, the blonde boy's excitement drained away and frowned. The white haired man left out the entrance, talking about "research" as he tailed a woman who he claimed had winked at him.

Eleven had no idea what kind of research he meant as he held an expression that she had never seen on Papa when he mentioned "research." All she knew was that the blonde boy was not happy. His expression looked like the one Lucas had when she was brought back to Mike's home the first time.

The boy took a key from the person behind the counter and walked to a stairwell, grumbling unintelligible words.

Not wanting another incident where someone grabbed her arm, she waited for the person to turn away from behind a potted plant. And it was a long wait. Too long for Eleven. She knew she had not fully recovered, but she tried to anyway. She needed somewhere to hide. Her face slightly tensed as her mind reached out to the person behind the counter, and with it she squeezed, causing blood to begin dripping from Eleven's nose. The person turned the brightest shade of pink that Eleven had ever seen as she made the person defecate. The person scrambled away, hiding the stains along the journey to a bathroom and spouting words of denial whenever someone asked about the stench.

Eleven smiled a bit and wiped her nose clean of blood as she staggered to the stairs. "3-0-8" had been the room number she heard being addressed to the white haired man and the blonde boy.

She climbed the stairs to the third floor and began searching for the specific room number. It was at the very end of the hallway on the right side. She twisted the knob gently to find it locked. She took a small step back and the sound of clacking from inside the knob rang quietly. Eleven's nose once more became bloodied as the door became unlocked, allowing her to open it telekinetically. She let out a small pant as she finished and collapsed at the door. She did not pass out, but she also did not have the energy to keep on standing. The blonde boy rushed to the door, bewildered by what he had just seen happen.

"What the hell?!" the boy exclaimed just to notice Eleven on the ground. "Hey, who are you? Are you okay?"

Eleven looked down at her left wrist. She slowly moved her right hand and grabbed the sleeve. Little by little she pulled the sleeve to reveal a small tattoo that was printed in black ink that said "011" in a squarish font.

The boy gave a confused look at it and said, "I meant what is your name? Like this, my name is Naruto Uzumaki."

"Eleven," Eleven replied as she slowly sat up and pointed at herself.

"Weird name, but whatever," Naruto said as he smiled. "Nice to meet you. Oh, how did you open the door like that? That was so cool!"

Eleven flinched at the sudden loudness Naruto exhibited. Then there was the fact he was really close. It made her feel a bit uncomfortable, so she got up and walked into the room.

She looked around the room to find it a bit larger than what she was used to in terms of a bedroom. There were two beds that were larger than the tiny cot she had laid upon for most of her life, covered in soft, fluffy blankets. Those fluffy blankets were begging to be touched from how they were cleanly spread out on the beds.

The floor was made out of glossy wood that she had only seen in Mike's house and at his school. The only difference was that this wood was very light in color in comparison to both the wood floors in both places she had thought of.

Eleven was brought out of her thoughts when Naruto shut the door and popped up right in front of her with a confused look on his face, "Hey, are you okay? You looked a bit out of it."

Eleven racked her head for the right response. What she came up with was, "Yes."

Naruto gave a funny look that Eleven was not entirely sure of. The expression seemed say that Naruto could tell that she was lying, but it also seemed uncertain. All the psychic girl could do was hope he did not press for more information. She did not want him to get hurt

or killed just because he knew what she was.

"If you say so," Naruto said before grinning again. "If you want, you can watch me practice a bit. Pervy Sage will hopefully get rejected by whoever that lady was soon. Then you can watch me train."

Eleven, not entirely sure what Naruto meant, simply complied and took a seat on one of the beds and munched on some of the dango she took. She looked up at Naruto and saw him cross his first two fingers over each other, making a cross.

Before she knew it, there were TEN Narutos in the room. Eleven gave a startled look as she backed up a bit. The clones poofed away the moment Naruto noticed the startled Eleven.

Eleven went up to Naruto and rolled up each sleeve of his jacket, bewildering the blonde as she examined his wrists.

"Not?" Eleven uttered as she showed her inked wrist once more to Naruto.

Naruto, still weirded out, shook his head and said, "I don't understand what you're trying to tell me. You should try to be less shy."

Eleven raised an eyebrow and asked, "What is 'shy'?"

Naruto was about to reply when a knock sounded on the door. The blonde instantly went from being weirded out to gleeful. He chuckled something under his breath, one of the phrases that Eleven could hear was "Pervy Sage," something she still needed to ask about.

Naruto opened the door to reveal a raven haired man in a long, baggy, weird black coat with red clouds with white borders sewn on them. On his head was a weird plate, like the one Naruto was wearing. The only difference was that the symbol was crossed out with a single, deep gash. Eleven's heart began to plummet, and her breath quickened as memories flashed within her mind from the apathetic look the man held. The more she looked back, the more she saw that Papa had that same look when she made him dissatisfied.

But what startled her more were his eyes. Red irids with three dots with pointy tails revolving around the pupil in a set direction. The

dots spun around the pupil just like the little, spinning person in the box that played music.

"Come with us," the man said in an unwavering, monotone voice.

2. Chapter Two: The Void

Chapter Two: The Void

Eleven watched as Naruto questioned who the man was. No names were given, only more questions when a second man appeared. The second man frightened Eleven. He was super tall. Taller than anyone she had ever known in her entire life. He was also literally blue and had strange features on his cheeks and sharp teeth that revealed themselves when he smiled. His teeth looked like the teeth of the Demogorgon. The way he smiled screamed demogorgon even though he was clearly not a demogorgon. Eleven's knees shook a bit, and she held herself for safety as Naruto talked to the two strange men.

A brief, small, fearful sob escaped Eleven's lips, alerting Naruto that something was very wrong.

"Eleven?" Naruto asked. "Are you okay?"

Eleven said nothing. Even though she was not friends with Naruto, she could not bring herself to lie to him a second time nor did she want to give her burdens to him. She already did that to Mike, and it was very painful. He made her feel unfamiliar but wonderful things that brought her good to her life. She did not want to give trouble for giving her his kindness with her problems.

"Can you just come with us already?" the blue man asked in an almost irate voice.

"Patience, Kisame," the red eyes man stated. "The Nine Tails will come in due time."

"Huh?" was all Naruto could respond with as his hand traveled to his stomach.

Eleven did not understand why Naruto reacted the way he did or why the men referred to him as Nine. He was not one of Papa's. He was not marked with a number on his wrist, and his name was Naruto, not Nine. She wondered if Naruto had a similar Papa to her own

Papa. One who marked his child in a different location and called the child something else.

She carefully walked forward into the hallway, gaining attention from the two men and Naruto. She then lifted up Naruto's jacket and shirt, making the blonde boy squeak in surprise and shock. The blue man, Kisame, barked out laughing at the absurd scene while the red eyed man just starred impassively at her. There was no number on Naruto's stomach either.

"I haven't laughed like that in a while, kid," Kisame said. "Unfortunately, that's not going to keep you safe from Samehada nor my partner, Itachi."

Eleven watched as Kisame began to pull out a large object with his right hand. It reminded her of the knife wielded by that mouth breather Troy. The only difference was that it was much larger, more rounded and held sharp mini-blades rather than just being one, and was wrapped in white cloth. As adrenaline pumped through Eleven's small body, the audible, sickening sound of something breaking sounded from Kisame's right arm.

"Gah!" Kisame growled as his good arm flew to his now broken right arm. He looked up and his beady eyes narrowed, "You!"

Once more all eyes were on Eleven. Eyes that were flabbergasted, calculating and analyzing, or pissed. Eleven's arm was out stretched. Her hand was mostly opened. Her face was contorted with strain. Her nose was dripping with fresh blood.

"No," Eleven said with an almost monotone voice as she scowled.

With a small, brief tilt of her head, Kisame was flung a meter or two back from where he was standing. Eleven panted as she hunched over a bit as sweat droplets began to form on her forehead.

Kisame got up seething as his broken arm hung from his shoulder. Despite the blue skin, bruises were visible, if the cloak sleeve did not cover it, and spreading as the area around the broken bones began to react to the damage. He bared his sharp teeth at Eleven as his blood lust soared.

"I will kill you for that, brat!" Kisame growled and began lunging at Eleven with his good arm balled up in a fist.

Eleven quickly threw up an arm, panic evident in her almost stiff posture and her narrowed eyes. Kisame hovered in midair, stuck in the position of midrun. Kisame let out grunts as he tried to move, but he felt a foreign force keeping him frozen in place. Before he knew it, he was thrown back and slammed head first into a wall that was several meters away, creating a hole in said wall that was roughly the size of himself and proceeded to fly out of the building. Kisame moaned from the severe blunt force trauma that he had just sustained.

Just as Kisame was about to lose consciousness, Itachi made his move and threw two shuriken at Eleven. Both implanted themselves into Eleven's outstretched forearm. Eleven screamed out in pain as tears poured out of her eyes as she jerked her arm back towards her torso.

As she screamed, all light bulbs within the building began to intensify and darken repeatedly before shattering. It was not just light bulbs that shattered either. Windows exploded into hundreds of glass shards. Any appliances that were on began going out of control, ultimately coming to a halt and short circuiting.

Itachi could not help but eye the child as she ripped the shuriken out of her arm and turned frightened eyes to him as she slumped to her knees. She was panting and clearly exhausted as blood was now streaming from both nostrils.

Itachi noted that Kisame was in critical condition. Aside from his broken arm, the damage Eleven had done to him was severe. He was now likely going to be out of commission for a while.

The raven haired man walked forward and allowed his Sharingan to bore into Eleven's eyes. Upon contact, Itachi began initiating a genjutsu.

In the Genjutsu...

Itachi found himself in a dark void with invisible liquid floors that his

feet never sunk into. The liquid surface was the floor much to Itachi's very minor and negligible surprise.

He looked up, Sharingan spinning as he went through Eleven's mental void to the first memory he could access. It was Eleven sitting at a table with electrodes attached to her shaved head. In front of her, in a cage, was a white cat that hissed wildly as it batted at the girl. Tears slipped from Eleven's eyes as the order to use her powers on the cat was given. Minutes of apparent hesitation passed before she threw off the electrodes that were stuck to her hair-stubbed scalp. The scene immediately faded out and quickly flashed to what happened next.

"NO! NO!"

He watched as men in white lab coats dragged Eleven down a hallway. Outside of the room she was dragged out of was a white haired man who watched the men take Eleven away with apathy.

"PAPA! PAPA! PAPA! PAAAAAPAAAAA! NOOOOOOO!
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

Before the girl was locked into a tiny two meter by two meter black room with no light, she used her powers on the two men who had the order to lock her up. One man went flying, creating a small crater in the cement wall as he died from blunt force trauma. The other fell to the ground dead as the girl snapped his neck, causing blood to spew from his mouth, with a jerk of her head. Blood pooled out of her ears and nose as she sobbed in the partly shut room. Her father came and carried her away bridal style, whispering the word "*Fascinating*." The vibes the man gave off reeked of similarities to Orochimaru.

The image changed back to black, and another scene began. This time she was in a small restaurant. Two people, both men in strange black attire that were like the outfits that were worn by men to a funeral back in Hidden Leaf, aimed strange weapons at Eleven. Not even a second later, there were sickening sounds of organs, bones, and flesh being crushed and twisted gruesomely. The two men then fell to the floor shortly after dying.

Another memory came and played. Eleven was screaming in a tank

filled with water as a wall crumbled apart near her. Ooze and sludge that pulsed slowly pooled out of the ever-growing crack as tendrill-esque vines slithered out as if they were snakes. It was almost alive with how it pulsed and thumped like a heart. A low growl sounded as a clawed, muted puke-brown, four-fingered hand reached out of the opening. Panic initiated within the room as lab-coated men and women ran about and alarms went off. The white haired man that Eleven called "Papa" pressed his lips, keeping calm but was disappointed at what was occurring. Eleven broke out of the tank in the middle of the chaos and ran for her life, trying to get away from not just the creature, but the lab itself. Despite that, she was far from freedom.

"The gate... I opened it... I'm the monster..." Eleven's sob-filled voice echoed over the memory with multiple brief flashes to her lying on the ground with the same outfit she was wearing. Next to her, there were two boys.

A panicked, frightened, little boy's voice came from a speaker that was hooked up to a strange machine. He frantically said, *"It's like home, but it's so dark! It's so dark and empty! And it's cold! Mom? Mom!"*

A memory of a black haired boy holding a game board played.

"What if this is Hawkins," the boy said before flipping the board over. *"And this is where Will is? The Upside Down."*

Another memory played. A third boy, who had a form of lisp in his speech due to missing his two top front teeth, asked, *"Like the Vale of Shadows?"*

A book was promptly opened up. Somehow, Itachi could understand the strange string of romaji characters written on the cover ("For Any Number of Players Ages 10 And Up - Dungeons & Dragons - Expert Rulebook") and on the pages. The third boy proceeded to read one particular passage out loud, *"The Vale of Shadows is a dimension that is a dark reflection or echo of our world. It is a place of decay and death. A plane out of phase. A place of monsters. It is right next to you and you don't even see it."*

"Mike..." Eleven weakly called out as her hand reached for a raven

haired boy with a dark jacket, the second boy from earlier memories, that was being held back by more men in white lab coats. Her Papa was murmuring about curing her from an illness. What that illness was had no presence anywhere in her mind other than here. It was deemed as some form of excuse in Itachi's opinion.

Itachi at this point felt a sharp headache come on. He hissed as his hand flew to his temple and massaged it. He looked up as he did this and saw the real Eleven standing across from him. She was pissed, scared, and traumatized from the genjutsu as she had seen what Itachi saw. The emotions that these memories projected onto the girl gave Itachi a good idea of her mental state and proceeded with caution.

"Go!" Eleven shrieked at him. "GO! GOOOO!"

Itachi did not even flinch at the girl's meltdown. He merely grunted and continued to use the genjutsu to select another set of memories. It was even less pretty to say at the least.

Another memory featured the dead body of a teenage girl with red hair and broken glasses. Out of her mouth crawled out a slug. Chants of Eleven frantically screaming "*GONE! GONE! GONE!*" echoed through the void that the prepubescent girl used to establish contact with the dead girl.

"*Your mom,*" Eleven's voice echoed as the memory of an almost dead boy appeared in what looked to be a run down wooden shelter covered in fleshy moss appeared in the middle of the black void. "*She's coming for you. Just... just hold on a little longer.*"

"*Hurry...*" the boy moaned in pain. His voice was hoarse with dryness and was barely audible.

The memory of a large, lean biped with puke brown skin hovered over a group of little boys replaced the previous memory. The creature had no face, just a mouth that opened like a blooming flower. Once opened, it bared numerous sharp teeth and roared. One of the boys fired rocks at it from a slingshot, which did nothing but piss it off. It lunged for them just to be pinned against a wall by Eleven.

"*The Demogorgon!*" Mike's voice echoed over the memory.

Eleven vocalized a forlorn, "*Goodbye, Mike*" before saying "*No more*" to the beast and atomizing it. It partly backfired as she herself was atomized along with the monster.

"STOOOOOOOOOOOP!" the real Eleven screamed out, her eyes drenched in tears.

The genjutsu was immediately shattered out of the void as a wave of psionic energies exploded from Eleven in the void.

Outside of the genjutsu, Eleven was on the rippling floor, curled up in a ball as she sobbed. Itachi narrowed his eyes at her. Eleven then looked up with a pained yet furious look. She lifted her arm at the raven haired man. Itachi felt his genjutsu's hold on Eleven's mind waver before she forced him and his genjutsu out in a swirl of fine particles.

Naruto had a hard time wrapping his head around what was going on. First, this strange girl, named Eleven, uses a cool jutsu to open the door to the room he was sharing with Jiraiya. She spoke even less than Hinata could ever speak, minus the stuttering that the shy girl had for some reason that he never understood.

Then come along these two freaky weirdos in black cloaks asking that he go with them and refer to him by the beast sealed within himself, said beast was supposed to be a super important secret that no one was supposed to know. He questioned how those two knew about the Nine Tails. It made no sense.

But then shit hit the fan. Big time. Eleven used that same jutsu she opened the door with to beat the freaky blue guy to bloody pulp and it was scary awesome. He could not contain himself outside of vibrating like a leaf. He wanted to learn that crazy jutsu so badly. It seemed like it had lots of awesome potential.

'*Hey,*' Naruto thought, becoming highly confused. '*Why are they staring like that? What is going on?*'

Itachi would normally find his victims of the genjutsu he had just used unconscious. It was not to the same degree of unconsciousness that Tsukuyomi brought on, and the victims normally recovered on their own as less mental strain was put on them. Still, they were, none of the less, rendered unconscious for a while.

In this case, Eleven was still very much conscious. She collapsed to the floor as weakness overcame her. She was breathing heavily as tears ran down her face just like in the mental void. She had successfully overcome his genjutsu with the only apparent damages being fresh mental wounds being poked and prodded at, visible fatigue, and more of the red little oxygen carriers escaping her nose, pooling on top of their dried and crusty predecessors from previous nose bleeds.

Itachi turned around and left the hotel. Once outside, he found Kisame in a crater in the stone road. Itachi preceded to help his partner to his feet. Kisame's eyes were unfocused and flickered between shut and open. From what Itachi could tell, careful actions were needed here. After all, Pein knew nothing of this visit and to sustain further damage caused by this unusual child would be undesirable.

So far, there was no way to dodge or evade the attacks that involve manipulating the body of her targets. Only way was to distract her, but even that so far proved to be just as bad considering the exterior and interior of the building was now littered with broken glass, fried electronics, and shattered light bulbs, windows, mirrors, and whatever other glass objects existed within the area.

If Pein were to find out of this encounter, his covert mission would be in jeopardy. So, in a swirl flock of crows, Itachi left with Kisame's barely conscious body. Hopefully, Kisame would recover enough to go along with the best course of action, which was to cover up this unauthorized trip.

3. Chapter Three: A Freak Like Me

Binas: I have more surprises coming up in the next few chapters. I hope that you like them. Chapter six and seven will be huge game changers.

Chapter Three: A Freak Like Me

Relief washed over Eleven as the raven haired man left, but she was still reduced to tears. That man, Itachi, entered her mind and dug into her memories. The painful memories that continued to pop up in her thoughts whenever she encountered something that, no matter how harmless, awoken them. He was worse than Papa.

Papa, even though he locked her away from the outside world and lied to her, had never dug up memories like that, especially in such a manner. At least he knew when she reached her limit in terms of physically, mentally, and emotionally. Even though it meant the dark, tiny room that suffocated her was where she would spend an immeasurable amount of time crying until she passed out from exhaustion, it was less bad than Itachi entering her mind and playing the memories. Having them mesh in a way that told him everything. Everything that hurt her.

She left Mike. She promised Mike to go to the Snow Ball with him as someone he liked, as he put it, before his lips meet her's. She was welcomed by him to stay at his home with an older and younger sister and new parents. She would get to be with her friends every single day. Papa and the bad men would never take her back to the bad place. She would be free.

She wanted the world to go dark. She wanted to sleep. However, she knew that she could not do that just yet. Itachi just left, and she was certain he would come back for her. Just like Papa. Just like the bad men.

"Eleven," a voice spoke as a hand waved in her face.

Eleven slowly turned her head to the voice, with hope. She thought

she heard Mike call her name. Once her eyes met the source, she felt an empty spot in her heart. Mike was not there. It was just Naruto, who looked very concerned but excited for some bizarre reason that Eleven could not place.

"Are you awake?"

Eleven gave Naruto a raspy "Yes" as the drying tears began to sting her eyes and her nose filled with suffocating mucus, as Papa called it, rather than blood.

Before anything further could happen, the sound of a door squeaking drew the attention of Eleven and Naruto towards the stairwell. A raven haired boy who looked to be the same age as Naruto walked into the hallway and scanned the area. Naruto was the first to say anything.

"Sasuke, what are you doing here?" the orange-clad blonde asked.

"Where is he?" Sasuke asked as he balled up his fists. His eyes were glaring at the hole in the wall. "Where is he?!"

Naruto gave a confused look and asked, "Where is who? Are you talking about the shark man Kisame or the Itachi guy who looked like an older version of you?"

Sasuke turned around, his eyes narrowed, "The latter, dead last! Where is my brother?!"

Naruto continued to look confused, "You mean, that was the guy who you were talking about when Kakashi-sensei had us introduce ourselves?"

"Yes!" Sasuke snapped. "How dense can you be, Naruto?!"

During the slightly one-sided shouting match between Sasuke and Naruto, Eleven began to try sitting up. Her energy was still drained, so she could not use her powers too much unless she wanted to go to sleep unwillingly. By the time Sasuke had called Naruto "dense," Eleven was on her feet. Her legs were weak, but she could deal with it for the moment.

"He left," Eleven stated.

Sasuke's attention turned to Eleven. His eyes scanned her with contempt. It made her feel uncomfortable. Ashamed.

"Who are you?" Sasuke asked coldly.

"My n...ame is," Eleven awkwardly tested the phrase on her tongue. It seemed right. Mike used it before, so it had to be, "Eleven."

Sasuke said nothing further to Eleven. She barely registered higher than Hinata in terms of importance to him. Both of them looked so weak and timid and could barely speak without stuttering. Both the first to be defeated if put on a battlefield was his final judgement.

"Naruto, you idiot!" Sasuke went right back to scolding. "Why did you let him get away?!"

"Shut up, you bastard!" Naruto yelled, having enough of Sasuke's attitude. "They were asking weird questions and trying to make me go with them! I don't know what they wanted!"

Eleven could tell that Naruto and Sasuke were friends and the blonde was lying about the latter part, so she said, "Friends don't lie. Naruto... like me... somehow."

Eleven exposed her tattooed wrist. Naruto once more was confused by what she was talking about. Sasuke glared at her and Naruto. What came next was unanticipated by Eleven.

"Let me rephrase that, why did you two let Itachi leave?!" Sasuke seethed.

Eleven choked back her anxiety. Sasuke was making her feel guilty. She hated being yelled at. It made her feel how she did when she disappointed Papa and he had the bad men locked her away.

Doing her best, she mustered, "He... hurt..." She followed up the words by tapping the side of her head. It was the best she could do to explain Itachi entering her mental void and digging up her bad memories. "Kisame hurt Naruto. I threw him. Itachi ran."

"Um, I don't know what you are trying to say," Naruto said as he mimicked the head-tapping gesture. "Itachi tried to hurt what?"

"Genjutsu," Sasuke said.

"Eh?" Naruto replied.

"Didn't you learn anything, you loser?" Sasuke snapped, making the targeted blonde frown. "He casted a genjutsu on her and tortured her mentally! Just like he did to me when he killed the entire clan! I was going to kill him if you two didn't let him escape!"

Eleven felt tears run down her cheek. She felt conflicted. On one hand Kisame was going to hurt her and Naruto if she did not do anything. Now she was being told that what she did was wrong. It confused her. It made her feel more guilty than before.

"I'm sorry," Eleven said quietly.

"You should be," Sasuke stated darkly.

"Enough!" Naruto snapped as he stepped between Eleven and Sasuke. "Neither of us knew that was your brother! You never told me, and you never met Eleven before! All you ever said about Itachi was that he was some guy that you wanted to kill! You can't expect anyone to know whatever the hell you are thinking! Just, what the hell, Sasuke?! Just leave her alone! Both of us could be dead if she didn't make them leave! Hell, Itachi could have done that gen-whatever to you again if she hadn't stepped in!"

Sasuke stood there. He was baffled by Naruto's sudden spike in anger. He swore he saw the whisker marks on his normally goofy face thicken a bit. He could only recall the idiot giving this sort of talk to Zabuza. He could feel Naruto's words cut through him like a finely sharpened kunai.

"Stop," the boys could hear Eleven beg. Her eyes were getting puffy from watching them fight.

"Neither of you understand!" Sasuke continued to shout. "You two are just-!"

Sasuke felt an invisible force push him on the ground. He looked around and saw no one else around that could have gotten him by surprise. This left the two boys confused as to what just happened.

Eleven struggled to stand off to the side, the old blood and mucus masking the fresh nosebleed from the two boys. She was too emotional to hold back the psychic shove she gave Sasuke. She just wanted the fighting to stop. Friends should not fight. Or at least, she thought they might be. Either way, she had enough fighting in the short time frame that she had been here.

"What's going on here?"

All three of the kids looked up at the new arrival. Naruto lit up and exclaimed, "Pervy Sage!"

"I'd appreciate it if you didn't call me that, brat," Pervy Sage, as Naruto called the white haired man, said as he looked at all of three them, "Looks like those two left before I got here."

"Yeah, because you were chasing another skirt!" Naruto pointed out a bit rudely before realizing something. "Wait, how did you know that there were two guys here?"

"The woman," Pervy Sage stated with a smile that made Naruto frown a bit. "I suspected it was Itachi and Kisame when I realized that the woman had one of Itachi's genjutsus on her. They wanted to occupy me while they took off with you. Though I wonder, just what made them run off?"

Eleven staggered forward, surprising Pervy Sage with her presence in the room. She said, "It was me."

"You're the kid from the food stand, right?" Pervy Sage asked, to which Eleven nodded yes to. "What's your name, kid?"

"Eleven," Eleven said as she showed him her wrist.

Pervy Sage studied Eleven's tattoo. His eyes, while still held the same friendliness as before, there seemed to be more to it. It a look of deep thought.

"Who did this to you?" Pervy asked.

"Papa..." Eleven said with sadness and pain in her voice.

"Did he have long black hair and pale skin?" Pervy Sage asked as he gestured the length of hair.

"No. White hair. It was short hair. Skin like mine," Eleven replied, her hand hovering a tiny bit over her head, showing Pervy Sage how long Papa's hair was.

"Did he have glasses?" Pervy Sage used his hands to simulate glasses.

"No glasses," Eleven replied.

Pervy mulled over the new information, 'Okay, that rules out Orochimaru and anyone who wears glasses. Poor kid. At least she is away from that monster. Hopefully Orochimaru does not catch wind of her.'

"Pervy Sage, what's with the weird questions?" Naruto asked.

"I was not sure if this girl was one of Orochimaru's test subjects or not," Pervy Sage said. "She is not, but I am going to keep an eye out for anyone who matches the description of her Papa and make sure no one else tries to capture her."

"Test subject?" Naruto asked.

"The tattoo on her wrist," Pervy Sage said, making Eleven feel self-conscious about it as she covered it up. "She was experimented on by her own father and he marked her place as such by tattooing a number on her."

Naruto spoke up, "When she saw me do the Shadow Clone Jutsu, she pulled up the sleeve on my jacket. When Itachi mentioned the Nine Tails, she lift up my jacket and shirt. Was she looking for a tattoo. She thought I was like her. Did she think I was a test subject?"

Sasuke frowned at the mention of the Nine Tails, "That doesn't sound right. The Fourth Hokage killed it thirteen years ago. Why would Itachi need someone as dense as Naruto for anything related to that

literal monster? I am going to be asking questions about it when I can. I might even have to ask, and I really hope not, Naruto of all people. That idiot better have an answer if no one else will give me one.'

The guilty look in Eleven's brown eyes reached Naruto's baby blue eyes. She said, "I'm sorry."

Naruto shot a large, forgiving smile towards the girl, which Eleven understood and made her smile back. She felt a small chunk of burden be lifted off her shoulders for making such an assumption.

"I am afraid so," Pervy Sage said with forlorn and turned his face to Eleven. "You must have not had much real human interaction, right?"

Eleven shook her head slowly in response. Thankfully there was no need for words to answer that question. Her anxiety was making it hard to speak the few words she did know.

Naruto became saddened by the revelation Pervy Sage gave. From just how Pervy Sage said those words hit like a boulder. He could not imagine how a test subject lived out his or her life with his or her experimenter. The result stood with him in the room. Eleven was not shy. She was damaged and socially handicapped so she would not be able to call out for help. Her own father did this to her, and that turned sadness into anger. Naruto maybe stupid and have the worst scores in the academy, but even he could pick up on these cruel facts.

"What kind of father does this to their own child?" Naruto asked with anger and sadness dripping from every word.

"A sick one, Naruto," Pervy Sage pointed out. "But we can get away from all of the depressing stuff for the time being. I have an introduction to give to your buddies," Pervy Sage said with a smirk. "The one you gave me was really unflattering."

"I am sure it will still be just as lame as last time," Naruto muttered.

Sasuke stood there, unable to comprehend what followed next. Pervy Sage summoned a toad that was about the size of a standard storage crate and stood upon it. The raven haired-boy felt his brain and his

IQ leak out of his ears when Pervy Sage lowered himself on the toad and the sound of the toad's hands knocking on the wooden planks that made up the floor.

"I am the gallant sage that hails from Mount Myoboku!" Pervy Sage began, confusing Eleven the further he went on. She had never seen such a long "hello, my name is-" from anyone ever. "The powerful toad hermit that all women fall to their knees for! I am also one of the three Legendary Sannin! I am JIRAIYA!"

Pervy Sage, now properly known as Jiraiya, began striking a series of fancy poses that made Naruto look bored. Sasuke was next to him, looking as if he had an aneurysm from the sheer eccentricity of what had just happened.

'Just great... One of the most powerful shinobi in history is an idiot like Naruto...' Sasuke thought with an expression that flawlessly blended baffled with annoyed, complete with a twitching left eye.

"That introduction was just as stupid as last time!" Naruto snarked.

Jiraiya shot a look at Naruto and said, "Will you stop calling it stupid?"

"Well, I think you just confused Eleven," Naruto pointed out, which was very much true as she still looked very confused.

Jiraiya's face was contorted into an expression that would go along with "Oh" and a sweat drop. He rubbed the back of his neck and asked, "You at least understood that was an introduction, right? I like being a bit flashy, it really heightens my best traits."

Eleven nodded, bringing relief to Jiraiya as he then thought, 'There is hope for this child... She must have had good friends to help her before winding up this far from home. Now, just to figure out what is going exactly around her and making sure Naruto doesn't nearly get kidnapped again.'

"Come on, you three," Jiraiya said. "We should get going. A lot of headway needs to be made."

With no arguments from Naruto and Eleven and a small gripe from

Sasuke, the four of them left the hotel. Almost an hour after leaving, the shout of "DYNAMIC ENTRY!" reverberated off the walls as a man in green spandex and orange leg warmers kicked his way into the hallway. The man flashed his signature grin.

"I, Mighty Gai, have come to-!" the man trailed off to see no one was present, "Huh, they must have left already. I will find those two Akatsuki members and show them the power that is YOUTH!"

With that, he shot through the opening made by Eleven throwing Kisame like a speeding bullet.

4. Chapter Four: The Curse

Chapter Four: The Curse

First thing Kisame saw when his vision cleared were the mixture of vivid and dark green trees above. The deciduous trees swayed back and forth in the mild, freshly cut grass scented breeze, allowing soft, yellow-white light to dance across his face. The shark man groaned from the bright light hitting his eyes directly. Off to the side, he saw Itachi dressing his arm with spare bandages and a makeshift splint from thick, shaved branches.

"Looks like we lost to a kid, didn't we?" Kisame semi-jokingly snorted.

Itachi's eyes blinked slowly as he gave a silent, small, singular nod and continued to secure the branch in place.

"That damn kid," Kisame groaned a bit as Itachi tightened the lower part of his arm as Itachi began wrapping a second bandage around it. "I don't think anyone has ever gotten me like that. Impressive, but infuriating. She even upsetted Samehada with that jutsu of hers."

"It was not a jutsu," Itachi stated.

"What?" Kisame asked with a raised eyebrow.

"My Sharingan detected no chakra within Eleven's body," Itachi said.

"That can't be right," Kisame frowned. "Your eyes can detect even the faintest of signatures, even if they are masked. I have seen it first hand on countless missions."

"Yes," Itachi began, "But she has none to detect."

"She should be dead if that is the case," Kisame said before hissing as Itachi began further securing the bandages around his arm.

"I don't know how she is alive," Itachi said as he fastened the bandages together. "But, she is someone we should avoid for now."

"Why do you say that?" Kisame asked. "Next time I see that Eleven kid, I will be more prepared for her little tricks."

"Yes," A deep, but young voice spoke. "Why do you want to avoid a little girl, un?"

Itachi frowned as he saw a smug looking blonde kid in his mid teens leaning against a tree. He looked as if were trying to hold back his laughter and his very long, blonde hair shaded away what he could not hide. He was adorning the same cloak as Kisame and Itachi, however it was a little smaller in size as his gangly adolescent body still had an inch or two to go before he reached his full adult height.

"Deidara," Itachi sighed. "What are you doing here?"

"I was in the area looking for supplies for Master Sasori," Deidara shrugged. "I just so happened to see you run away with your tails between your legs, un. So I naturally followed from there. Again, you've underestimated my skills."

"This does not concern you nor your skills as a ninja."

"It concerned me when I saw the windows explode with no visible cause," Deidara retorted, not losing his cool smirk. "I am assuming that Eleven kid who beat you caused that to happen."

Itachi narrowed his eyes at the blonde, just making him grin more. The blonde followed with a look of approval and respect on his face and said, "Wow. Those were some pretty artistic skills she displayed. Needs more refining, but impressive for her age, un. I wish I could have met her myself."

"Don't mention any of this to our leader." Itachi warned.

"So, he doesn't even know about this?" Deidara asked as his smug grin grew. "I wonder how explosive Pein will get if he knew."

"You will not tell him anything, Deidara." Itachi stated firmly as the Sharingan whirled to life in his dark, coal-gray eyes.

"I don't plan on telling him anything," Deidara replied, giving a look that was a hybrid of unease and irritation at the sight of Itachi's

dojutsu. "I'm nothing like Zetsu's obnoxious 'good boy' subordinate. But I do want to hear more about this Eleven kid, un. She sounds like the kind of kid I would like to take as an apprentice."

Itachi sighed internally and said, "All you need to know is that she is not from here and not to engage in battle with her."

Deidara raised a questioning blonde eyebrow that screamed "explain, you damned Uchiha."

Itachi did not give further explanation on the girl. Instead, he walked to the river and dunk a piece of cloth in the river. He rung it out as he went back to Kisame and applied it to the bruise on his head.

"Screw you, Itachi, un," Deidara huffed as he crossed his arms and turned around.

"If you must insist on knowing something from the direct encounter," Itachi sighed, "Be vigilant. I have a bad feeling about what is to come from her arrival. I saw a being that lacked a face. Something tells me there might be more."

Deidara perked up at that and gave a look that was primarily confusion mixed with annoyance, bitterness, and bewilderment. As much as he hated the Uchiha for beating him when he was twelve and already considered a formidable and prodigal shining and candidate for Tsuchikage when the time came (prior to being kicked out for wanting to improve his art while making Onoki-baka proud and gain some respect from him and everyone else on the side) and the needlessly uncalled for riddles Itachi spouted, he could not help but be curious as to what he saw. Itachi was a know it all prick that caged him and clipped his wings in Deidara's book.

So in this case, Deidara could not help but ponder on what a faceless beast could do. Maybe he should scout the area with Sasori at some point. On the positive note, he would one up Itachi by doing such a mission the correct way by getting it authorized by Pein. Either way, he had no intention of telling on Itachi and getting thrown into another one of Itachi's damned unartistic genjutsus. Not when he had yet to complete the final round of testing for his left eye.

Then again, the genjutsus he tested on himself were ones of his own design and only once had to have the stupid Uchiha break him out of it.

'You will pay, Itachi,' Deidara thought bitterly.

What shook Deidara out of his daydream of brutally killing Itachi was the projection of Pein. Pein's Rinnegan bore into the three of them with lack of expression behind them.

"Why are you three not back yet?" Pein asked. "I have a mission that I need to assign to you immediately."

"We got side tracked by a hunter ninja," Itachi stated. "She caught Kisame off guard and he needs to recover some before we headed back."

Kisame squirmed a bit mentally. He did not like hearing lies, much less adding on to an existing lie himself. He hesitantly said, "Yeah, she hit me with a highly unorthodox attack I was not familiar with."

"I just finished getting some supplies for Master Sasori," Deidara shrugged nonchalantly, smirking within his mind about how he did not have to lie at all and added another point for himself on his mental scoreboard. "And I picked up some extra clay to use for experimenting with my art, un."

Pein gave a slight nod, "Very well. Patch up and hurry back to the closest hideout. This is an emergency mission."

With that Pein's projection dissipated, leaving the trio of S-Class ninjas by themselves.

Some time later, the group had long passed the town outskirts and were currently walking through the fields that Eleven had traversed earlier. The shaven child was nestled in Jiraiya's middle-aged, but strong arms like a small toddler. Her eyes were partly shut as a small, cool breeze brushed against her pale cheeks. She let out small, quiet exhales through her nose every so often as she rested. Her energy had been long depleted and, from Jiraiya's observations, was in no

condition to travel by foot like Sasuke and Naruto. And this was not accounting for the lack of chakra in her body. It was no secret as even an academy student could tell that she lacked the vital energy that everyone has, or in this case, should have.

Sasuke walked on Jiraiya's left side while Naruto took the right side. The raven-haired boy's dark eyes bore at Eleven. Aside from the fact that Naruto and her let Itachi get away, Sasuke was pissed at one other thing that was obvious. She chased his brother away, something that his eight year old self could not do and was something he hoped to achieve if he was not able to kill Itachi. He would make the clan murder run to the ends of the Earth and once he was strong enough, Sasuke planned to kill him if he had not done so already by that point.

Again, Sasuke felt the pain of defeat grip his heart, causing the curse seal to reverberate against the seal Kakashi put on top of it. Kakashi put the second seal on the curse seal to keep it from sucking his chakra dry so long he was unwilling to use the curse seal Orochimaru placed on him. It caused burning, clawing pain to shoot through his shoulder, down his arm, and up his neck as it tried and failed to spread like it had in the Forest of Death. He fell to his knees as he grabbed his shoulder. Even though no matrices stretched from the cursed seal, the pain associated with them still existed and the anger and hatred that his heart held fed it and the will to not use the seal waned.

Jiraiya and Naruto turned around and rushed to Sasuke's side. The boy tried to intimidate the two away with a deadly scowl.

"Sasuke, what's the matter with you?" Naruto asked as he tried to get a look at what Sasuke was covering up.

Sasuke used his head and head-butted Naruto back a bit, "Nothing, loser! Just leave me alone!"

Naruto rubbed his sore head, trying to do his best to massage the pain away. He could now confirm that Sasuke's skull was made of concrete, because it hurt like that chunk of concrete someone threw at him one time.

Jiraiya's eyes narrowed as he set the now awake Eleven down, not buying Sasuke's lie, and this was not just because the boy was in blatant pain. The middle-aged shinobi grabbed Sasuke in a way that would keep the irate Uchiha still, but give him a good look at what his right hand was cradling. An irritated sigh escaped his lips when he saw what was on Sasuke's left shoulder.

"Damn it, Orochimaru," Jiraiya cursed as he bit the finger of his free hand, drawing blood. "Hold still kid, I have not tested this, but it should work."

Sasuke gave an angered look of disapproval. He continued to struggle free from Jiraiya's strong, one-armed hold on him. He felt Jiraiya draw something on his shoulder with his blood. With a slam and a torrent of Jiraiya's chakra entering his shoulder, Sasuke let out an ear splitting, blood curdling scream.

Naruto watched with wide eyes, wondering why Jiraiya had needed to use what looked like summoning jutsu on Sasuke's shoulder. It made very little sense in his head as Sasuke insisted he was okay whenever his shoulder was in pain. He just could not figure out why it was different this time.

Eleven flinched back with a horrified look etched into her visage. Sasuke was hurt before and now he was hurt even more. Granted he was a mouth breather and she hurt him a bit, but this was a lot more than she was willing to do for the things he said. Sasuke's screams were full of haunted pain. She would have stepped in to stop Jiraiya from hurting the mouth breather in this way, but her energy was still depleted. She could only sit on the ground and watch.

Eventually, Sasuke stopped screaming and panted. Both arms fell in front of him as he used them for support. Sweat fell down his face as he tried to reorient himself. The burning claws in his shoulder vanished completely as Jiraiya lifted his hand up. Sasuke looked and saw that the curse mark was gone. He could feel the fog that developed in his brain, without his knowledge, slowly lift away. While his loathing of his brother remained, he could feel that it was calming down. It was no longer distorted like one million fun-house mirrors reflecting each other and the object in front of them.

"That was worse than the last curse mark I have encountered," Jiraiya said with a frown. "Orochimaru really improved the sealing matrix. Now why would someone use an Evil Sealing Jutsu on a curse mark? That is just an amateur mistake."

Jiraiya looked up and saw the horrified look on Eleven's face. He got up and slowly approached her, making sure to not make any sudden movements that could be mistaken for hostility. Despite this, Eleven still scooted away.

"Kid, I am not going to hurt you," Jiraiya said calmly.

"You hurt him," Eleven said pointing at Sasuke, who huffed with arrogance.

Jiraiya shook his head, "It was not my intention to hurt him. I was trying to remove something that was going to eventually get him killed. Curse marks are always painful to either inflict, seal off, or remove."

"What is curse mark?" Eleven asked as her body conveyed suspicion and confusion.

"Yeah, what are they, dattebayo?" Naruto asked, showing curiosity and confusion.

"A curse mark is a type of fuinjutsu, sealing technique," Jiraiya began. "They are typically used by people to place others under their control. However, the curse mark Sasuke had was given to him by Orochimaru and seemed to lack that purpose. There is a sort of signature to it that makes it clearly of his own design. From what I know, Orochimaru uses them in many of his experiments, probably similar to what you went through, Eleven."

Eleven nodded, feeling a pain of emotion strum at her heart. She felt sympathy for the mouth breather. It gave him no excuse to be mean, but she would understand if Sasuke was just like her. A test subject. And Orochimaru was Sasuke's Papa just like how Papa was her own.

"Why hurt?" Eleven asked.

"Curse mark removal hurts because of the nature and intent used

upon creation and application," Jiraiya continued, doing his best to explain it to the young girl and Naruto. "It is to make it so that removal seems like a bad idea. I have removed a couple of Orochimaru's before, but he changes the matrices ever so often, making it hard to remove them without causing pain. All I need you to understand, Eleven, is that even though Sasuke was in pain during the removal, he is much better off now than he was. He is much safer despite it being a painful procedure. A good example would be moving a broken bone back to where it should be. It hurts like hell, but it allows the injured person to heal in the best way possible."

Eleven once more nodded. It made a little bit more sense now, but she still did not like it. Inflicting pain to help someone did not sit right. It sounded wrong, but from what she could see, Sasuke did look a bit better now prior to the curse mark being removed. He had a bit more of his prior color and less hostility in his posture. He seemed to have calmed down a bit. Those few things showed that Jiraiya was not lying and was not like Papa. He wanted to help like how Benny, Mike, Lucas, Dustin, Joyce, Nancy, Jonathan, and Hopper did. Jiraiya was not like Papa.

"But you said you did not test that jutsu, Pervy Sage," Naruto said. "How did you even remove any curse marks before if you never tested it?"

"I what I meant, brat, is that I had to modify it slightly to match up it with the curse mark matrices Sasuke had," Jiraiya sighed with a face palm. "Orochimaru changes the seal occasionally and if I did not modify the removal jutsu, it would have likely either done nothing or worsen the effects of the curse mark. It's like trying to put shaped blocks into their proper holes. Please tell me that you at least know the square block does not go in the circle hole."

Naruto just glared at Jiraiya for insulting his intelligence with the last sentence. Sasuke gave a smirk at the burn Naruto received and said, "It is likely he does not."

"OH GO SCREW YOURSELF, SASUKE!" Naruto exploded with anger. "OF COURSE THE SQUARE BLOCK DOESN'T GO INTO THE CIRCLE HOLE! IT GOES IN THE DAMN SQUARE HOLE! I'M NOT STUPID, DATTEBAYO!"

"Keep telling yourself that, loser," Sasuke said. It was not malicious like earlier and that surprised Eleven. It was more along the lines of the snark, as Mike called, that was exchanged between him and his friends. It was still something a mouth breather would say, though.

Jiraiya could not help but laugh at the childish bantering as he picked Eleven up off the ground. The group kept on going with little happening on the magnitude of the curse mark acting up.

By another few kilometers or so later, Naruto asked Jiraiya, "Do you know why Sasuke's brother and the shark-looking guy were after me? They said something about the Nine Tails and it following them."

Jiraiya gave a look that said he knew and was very concerned. His eyes then shifted to Sasuke then Eleven. His eyes closed softly for a moment and he let out a breath.

"I know why, but I need it to remain between just the four of us unless told otherwise. It is very dangerous secret that should not be shared with everyone," Jiraiya said with a serious tone. No playful smirks or perverted jokes were attached to the delivery of what was said, "And I mean it. Sasuke, Eleven, you two are not allowed to share this with anyone especially. Promise?"

Eleven nodded. She could keep secrets, and it was sadly due to the fact she lacked the vocabulary needed to do so. And she also knew what a promise was. It was something that could not be broken.

Sasuke followed suit with intrigue. He did not even have to ask himself. It was Naruto, of all people, who asked this question. If Naruto did not know, then now was a good time to capitalize on his friend's question and learn as much as he could.

"Very well," Jiraiya began. "Eleven, I don't expect you to understand all of this, but that is alright. You will be caught up later."

Eleven raised an eyebrow at that as she shifted in Jiraiya's arms a bit. Either way, she was ready to listen to what had to be said. She may not know Naruto very well, but he was a halfway friend now. She wanted to understand him better so she could befriend him.

"You know how the Nine Tailed Fox attacked the Hidden Leaf Village thirteen years ago, right?" Jiraiya asked, getting a firm confirmation from both Sasuke and Naruto. Naruto, however, looked a bit upset when he gave his confirmation, "I am pretty sure Naruto knows this next part. The Fourth Hokage never killed it. You cannot kill a Tailed Beast off for good. They regenerate quickly depending on how powerful they are. The Fourth Hokage had to seal it away instead. Another issue is that what the Tailed Beast is sealed into must be a living being with strong chakra and is young enough for his or her body to adapt to the Tailed Beast's own chakra. When that happens, the vessel becomes a Jinchuriki. A human baby from a clan with large pools of chakra like the Uzumaki clan is one of the more ideal choices for this process."

"I have a clan?!" Naruto asked excitedly, snapping out of the sadness that had befallen on him.

"Yes, and since someone neglected to share that bit of information with you, I can tell you more later," Jiraiya replied before getting back on topic. "Anyways, the Fourth Hokage sealed the Nine Tails into you to stop its rampage. He succeeded at the cost of his own life due to the seal he used to weaken the fox prior."

Sasuke's eyes widened with realization as what was said got processed in his mind. The signs were so clear that no one noticed them in his age group. It explained why many of the adults dragged their kids away when Naruto tried to play with them. It explained why Naruto bragged about getting his own apartment at the age of five. It was because the orphanage kicked him out. Naruto had no idea what was going on in the background outside of being kicked out and trying to make light of it for himself by bragging about his "new" apartment in a deserted part of the village. It was more deserted and worn down than the empty Uchiha compound was today. It explained the leers that came from Iruka's former assistant, Mizuki, who promptly disappeared shortly after graduation and before team assignments. Naruto was seen as the beast that was supposedly killed on the night of October 10th, the day Naruto was born.

Sasuke looked at Naruto. Naruto, despite the effort he was putting up, was visibly bothered by the dawn of realization on Sasuke's face.

He had a fearful look in his blue eyes. Sasuke had seen it many times prior to being put on Team Seven. Prior to producing some of the worst illusionary clones with the clone jutsu he had ever seen and inventing the obnoxiously obscene Sexy Jutsu to shock the adults around him in some of his many, many pranks.

"The Akatsuki are after the Nine Tails. The reason why they want it, I am not sure at the moment," Jiraiya continued. "That is why they are after you, Naruto. By kidnapping you, they would have indirect access to the beast and be able to use it for whatever purpose they want. They are very likely to try again at some point and they will not be as willing to flee."

As per his unofficial title of "Number One Unpredictable, Hyperactive Ninja," Naruto's concerns and worry melted away to give way to determination. He proclaimed, "I will just have to get stronger whenever I can then, dattebayo!"

"Well, you are in luck," Jiraiya said. "I have just the jutsu to teach you when we get to the next village that should help time pass by."

By that point, Eleven could only grab a hold of Jiraiya's kimono jacket tightly as Naruto bounced around, shouting with joy. She did not understand what a jutsu was, or almost anything that was discussed. She felt just as lost as she had been when she first stepped outside of the lab the fateful day where she opened the Gate during contact with the Demogorgon.

"Why do you say that?" Naruto asked as soon as he processed the other part of what Jiraiya said. "What else are we doing?"

"We are looking for the one who will help Kakashi and your friend and become the next Hokage, the Legendary Sucker, Tsunade," Jiraiya said as he flashed a smile.

Eleven knew the smile on Jiraiya's face. It was the one that Mike wore when his lips meet her own. Eleven wondered if Tsunade was more than a friend for Jiraiya like how Mike was more than a friend for herself. Jiraiya went on talking about who Tsunade was. She had no idea what gambling was, but from how Jiraiya talked about gambling Eleven could tell it was something that Papa would have

not liked at all.

5. Chapter Five: The Tendril & the Plantman

Chapter Five: The Tendril and the Plant Man

Elsewhere... Some time later...

Deidara wore a deep frown as he walked a bit behind Sasori (who was forced to not wear his puppet by Pein), Tobi, and Itachi as the quartet traversed through the forests near the border of the Land of Fire. He muttered under his breath as he complained about how he "got stuck with the talentless Uchiha prick and Zetsu's dumbass subordinate" in his head. He had no serious qualms about Sasori. He was easy to rile up a tiny bit during their art discussions, but he would not disrespect him like how Hidan liked to. He would forever be thankful that he had the decency to not call Sasori's puppets "little girls' dolls." Only an absolute fool like Hidan and Tobi would do that in Deidara's opinion. Deidara did wish that his teammate would appreciate his art a bit more like it should be. He did destroy several villages single handedly with it. It should be respected more on that merit alone.

"-And I said, 'Mr. Zetsu? Captured? How could this possibly happen?! He's our spy and most trusted member of the Akatsuki! He's the reason why we know where all of the Jinchuriki are located!'" Tobi rambled like a madman, complete with laughter that would come as a response to horrid joke.

"Will you shut up, un?" Deidara groaned in vain.

Sasori, while just as irritated as Deidara by Tobi's rambling, shot a bitch face at the blonde and said, "Now you know what it is like for others to hear your stupid notions of art."

Deidara held up a hand and let it blow a raspberry at the red haired Sand ninja. Sasori looked at him impassively and shook his head before turning around. Deidara could hear the words "You are a very immature teenager, Deidara" come from Sasori. The rouge Stone Ninja rolled his eyes up to the sky with a sigh.

'What does it take to get some respect around here?' Deidara thought as his hands lightly slapped the sides of his face. Thankfully the mouths on his palms did not open, that would have made things worse since Tobi was present. 'Five years and they STILL see my art and I as inferior! And they still look down upon all of the success I brought thanks to that damned Itachi Uchiha! Do I have to kidnap a freaking kage by myself to get any respect?'

Ahead of all of them, Itachi walked. His eyes had the sharingan present in them as he scanned all around for the smallest movements. Precision was key to find where Zetsu was located in the fifty kilometer radius of his last known location.

Occasionally Itachi's eyes would flicker back to Tobi out of suspension. He knew the masked man-child's true identity as being the man who helped him with slaughtering the Uchiha clan. What Tobi was displaying was the most irritating façade Itachi had ever seen. Itachi needed to know just what he was planning in the background exactly. He needed to know if and when Tobi would go after his little brother. Itachi's face never once faltered in regards to these thoughts. He kept a blank look that was prominent in most of his deceased clan members.

One by one, small spores began to dance within his line of sight, making him stop. The spores danced all around the four Akatsuki members in the rough, dead wind that began blowing. The temperature took a sharp nose dive, sending shivers down all but Sasori's spines. Even Itachi could not help but shudder at the alien chill that gripped the air and began vacuuming heat from everything in the area.

Tobi shivered, unable to shake the sense of dread that laced area. He tried with all his might to suppress reflex. In the end, "nature" won and he continued to subtly shake.

Tobi asked, "Is it just me or is this place super creepy? I mean, it really reminds me of that one book that gave me nightmares. Oh, will somebody please hold me?!"

Tobi, with exaggerated flailing limbs moving about, pounced on Deidara. Deidara felt his anger explode outwards as he grabbed Tobi

and flung him a small distance away. He then made a small C1 spider and chucked it the masked moron. With one hand sign, the bomb exploded with Tobi in very close proximity. Tobi flew deep into the spores, which became dense enough to effectively mimic a very dark room with almost no light except for the very faint glow of a small handful of dying fireflies.

"Deidara, that was very unwise and reckless," Sasori stated as he gave bored glare to the blonde.

"You would have done it to that idiot too," Deidara retorted. "Don't deny it, un. You've hit me with all of your poisons in the middle of battles. This is no different."

"My poisons did not make any sounds in comparison to your pathetic excuse of art," Sasori replied. "What you just did could have alarmed any nearby enemies. Now quit wasting our time. I don't like to keep our leader waiting."

Deidara glared at Sasori as the red head continued forward with Itachi. Unlike Tobi, Deidara could not blow up a bomb next to Sasori and expect to be perfectly unscathed one hundred percent of the time. He knew Sasori was competent in battle and would easily punish him now or later with a new poison that had a theoretically working antidote for pushing his luck. The only upside Deidara could see from that was gaining immunity to Sasori's new poison if he did not change the chemical formula to much. In his book, that was not a lot to go for. He wanted more than just that. Something like the look of absolute terror. Seeing people like Sasori and Itachi break away from monotonous, boring expressions was what Deidara found to be the most satisfying. They were just as fleeting as his art and were unheard of. They were unique expressions on them. It was a small thing for him, but it would still be the sight he wanted to see.

Deidara snapped out of the daydream of finally wiping Sasori and Itachi's faces clean of their bland, eternal expression to find himself all alone in the dark, spore infested forest. He looked around to see that the darkness had faintly spread. He could tell that it was thanks to his highly artistic eyes. Whatever was spreading, it did not bode well with him. It seemed that the more the fleshy, dark substance and what seemed to be vine-like snakes became concentrated in one area

and/or spread, the colder the world became around him. Its depressing and dreadful appearance and feel conflicted with his bright and wild flare. It was nothing but death and decay. It was hideous.

Deidara narrowed his eyebrows as he conducted his own investigation. He knew that this was very much unnatural down to the rapid rate of spread. It seemed that every minute or two there was at least a small amount of movement made by the fleshy membranes and webs that decorated the wilting grass. When he bent down to examine what was slithering across the ground, he could definitely say that the vine-like snakes were really snake-like vines.

A plant that moved and behaved like a snake was something that made Deidara get up and stomp on it with all of his strength with the heel of his foot. The vine reminded him too much of Orochimaru. That man caused almost the same amount of trouble for him as Itachi. It was because of Orochimaru that Itachi threw him into the birdcage known as the Akatsuki. The man even had the nerve to make him want to throw up on one occasion by explaining how he would study the Hidden Stone Village's Kinjutsu and the effects it had on him since the day he used it on himself. Orochimaru was right under Itachi in the list of those he wanted to kill most.

Once the vine was nothing but pulp in the area he stomped on, Deidara moved on, feeling shivers run down his spine at the memories that surfaced. He made a sick grimace to go with the shivers and it was on full display.

'Ugh... Disgusting!' Deidara mentally groaned as he pulled his foot out of a puddle of an unknown slime that had the consistency of melted, regurgitated human flesh. What was even worse was the fact the slime had the worst odor he had ever smelled in his life. 'Where the hell is Zetsu? The others I could care less about right now. They only seem to want to just piss me off.'

The glimpse of a strange pulsation caught the bomber's attention. His light blue eyes narrowed at it as the clear, red mass thumped like a heart pumping blood in the ground. Gunk seemed to pour out of it like blood pouring from a wound. Deidara approached the mass and could make something out on the other side. He saw trees. Despite all

of the trees already around him, it was not a reflection he saw.

Hesitantly, he placed a hand on the membrane, making sure that the mouth on it was shut first. The mass felt slimy and had the texture of melted flesh and the scent of decay. He pressed harder, causing the fragile membrane to perforate. Not anticipating the fragility, Deidara fell into the opening to be greeted with a face full of dead grass. By reflex, he spat a bit despite not getting anything in the mouth on his face.

The teen got to his feet and looked around to find nothing but pure darkness, decay, snake-like vines, fleshy moss, millions of free-floating spores being carried by dead winds, and a sky filled with ominous black clouds. Deidara became still as his brain processed the alien world. So familiar in many ways, but just as foreign. It was a place he never thought would exist. A world of eternal death, the opposite of both his own and, ironically to a degree, a bit of a dark twist on Sasori's views of art as there was no beauty to it. It was dead and ugly and there was no way to rectify this artistic sin. It was eternal death.

Deidara moved the hair away from the scope that sat firmly in place on his left eye. He then shifted it to night vision mode and adjusted the zoom on it. Once he got a clearer view through it, he saw a towering building that stood tall amongst the trees with large satellite dishes decorating the flat roofs.

Wasting no time, Deidara ran towards it. From his current hypothesis, that building was likely the only shelter in this area. If Zetsu was here, then that would be one of the most likely places he would hide. After all, there seemed to be absolutely zero life present if the smell of toxic fumes originating from the flora meant anything.

Once Deidara got a good look via climbing a tree, he looked down at the ground near the building. What he found shot down part of his hypothesis. He saw three live men in strange, white, full body suits with air-tight helmets. Those people were constructing something in the middle of the yard of the building. It had barometric tools and other instruments attached to a large, metal base with flashing electrical devices.

"It will take time getting readings on what elements and compounds make up this dimension's atmosphere," the first man said.

"Are the emergency sensors fully operational?" the second man asked.

"Affirmative," the third said after hitting a few buttons.

"Let's jam out of here, boy scouts," the second man said, eliciting a collective stare as he began walking to the building. "I am not sure about you, but I am not about to be some alien tendril's bitch."

As the men left, Deidara raised an eyebrow and thought with a disgusted cringe, *'So that is what those snake-like vines are called here. Doesn't make it any better. It actually makes it worse... I am not into tendril stuff... Or S and M... Nasty images aside before I throw up, if I follow... the tendrils, I will eventually find Zetsu and get this job done.'*

Deidara leapt out of the tree and began chakra hopping with his eyes focused on both his surroundings and on the tendrils that slithered around slowly as they searched for prey. The blonde kept a careful eye on it. If that man spoke any truth, getting caught by the tendrils was not in his best interest. It would jeopardize the mission and be incredibly embarrassing. He did not want to give anyone anything else to rub in his face or annoy him with. He already had three pain in the ass members to deal with.

Eventually, he came to a halt in front of a building that stood tall at the height of three stories in what appeared to be a former downtown area. It was covered from top to bottom in tendrils, black goo, and more of the fleshy membrane. Standing on each side of the entrance were two light posts with spherical bulbs. Light flickered within them as if something was interfering with their electrical currents.

Deidara cautiously walked inside and what was on the inside made him raise an eyebrow. It was a library. A library that was barely recognizable outside of the tipped over carts of books and smashed bookshelves. He took a step forward just for him to step on of the hundreds of decomposing bodies in the building. He let out a disinterested grunt and kicked some of the bodies out of his way.

His sky blue eyes studied the library's interior. All around the tendrils

crawled, leaving no surface untouched. All over the floor laid countless bodies that were in different stages of decomposition. All of the bodies had gaping mouths that suggested that something had gagged them so they could not scream out for help. One body was that of a teenage girl with red hair. Around the teenager's mouth was dried up slime, suggesting something crawled out of the teenager's mouth.

Deidara was about to head into the next room when he then heard choked sobs. He turned around to see a little boy curled up in an sitting fetal position, complete with head of brown hair tucked into his knees. He wore strange blue pants and an equally strange red jacket with a yellow stripe around his upper chest and shoulders.

'How did that kid sneak up on me?' Deidara thought. 'And there is no chakra in him, just like that girl the Uchiha ran into.'

The boy looked up at Deidara with wide brown eyes that were full of trauma. At the same time, Deidara could see sympathy. And the boy's sympathy was aimed at Deidara. It was a bit awkward and confusing as to why the boy would want to direct sympathy at him.

"Ar...re you trapped here in the Upside Down?" the boy asked.

Deidara gave the boy a funny look and said with crossed arms, "No. But I am looking for someone, un."

"Wh...at does he look like?" the boy asked.

"A lot taller than me, same cloak as mine, his skin is literally half white and half black, and he has green hair, and a fly trap around his neck," Deidara described.

The boy shook his head, to which Deidara huffed at and began walking away. Deidara stopped mid-step when the boy called out and said with a few more sobs that were obviously being held back, "He might be here in the library... The Demogorgon took me into the back... Your friend might be there too..."

Deidara shot a look at the boy and said, "He is not my friend, un. And what is a demogorgon, kid?"

Deidara watched as the boy's body began to flicker like static, causing him to raise an eyebrow. The kid managed to say "A faceless monster with a mouth that blooms like a flower" as tears ran down his cheeks and he bowed his head in fright and trauma from the memories of the monster. After that, the kid vanished into thin air, leaving Deidara alone in the library's main room.

Deidara narrowed his eyes as he turned towards the door that lead into the back room. The door looked horribly worn from heavy abuse. Just as he began walking to it, whispers sounded all around Deidara. All of them were coming from what seemed to be little kids who were nowhere to be seen.

"Will, this is the second time that you completely spaced out," the first boy said. *"Tell us what's going on."*

"Yeah, you had us worried when you just suddenly got up like that!" a second boy exclaimed as quietly as possible.

"It was nothing, guys," the third boy, who Deidara recognized as the kid who snuck up on him. That boy was named Will.

"Will, we all know that is a big fat lie," a fourth boy said. A lisp was evident in his voice. *"You were crying and mumbling things. It was like you were going mental. We're your friends, and we'll handle this together..."*

The conversation faded into the ambient noises that the world produced. It was unnerving in Deidara's opinion to say at the least. He had never heard of such a jutsu nor kekkei genkai that caused what had just happened. A jutsu that allowed one to exist in two worlds simultaneously. It was unheard of and completely out there. It was beyond the space-time ninjutsu that existed.

Shaking the distracting thoughts out of his head, Deidara pressed forward towards the door and opened it. Inside he found a truly gruesome sight and he barely batted an eyelid at it. There was no time to be disgusted by the array of slithering tendrils and pulsating masses of moss and goo.

Deidara approached the largest mass and examined it. He could make

out parts of Zetsu's venus fly trap collar. He pulled out a kunai and began slicing through the tendrils and disgusting moss. Some chunks of moss got into one of the mouths on his hands and it began sputtering with repulsion, which was evident in the sounds it made. Deidara cringed, as he also got to taste it as well. It was up there with rice pilaf in terms of disgusting texture and taste. He actually wanted to throw up from the taste alone, but he suppressed the urge and kept cutting the tendrils.

Eventually, Zetsu fell out of the tendrils onto the floor, completely limp. Deidara turned over Zetsu's body and immediately he fully understood what "become some alien tendril's bitch" meant. There was a tendril glued into Zetsu's mouth by a bunch of dark goo. Deidara began yanking on the tendril, trying to get it out. It seemed forever as the tendril was entrenched deep in Zetsu's equivalent of a stomach. Deidara did not really understand Zetsu's biology for one reason he never wanted to in the first place.

After a few more tugs, Deidara got the tendril out of Zetsu and it wriggled in his hands, trying to attach itself to him. Deidara's eyes widened as he ducked his head. The tendril was fighting and striking in every direction it could from within Deidara's hands. The blonde teen grimaced as it continued to shove itself into the mouth on his face and down his throat. Deidara wanted to let it go, but he knew if he did, the thing would lunge at him with the impressive speed it was going at right now.

Deidara began stomping his right foot around, trying to step onto the tendril with little success. The wriggling and squirming it did made it difficult to step on it without letting go of it.

'Not sure how much longer I can keep this thing away from me. Why do I always get stuck with short end of the stick?' Deidara grumbled inside his own mind. *'First Itachi and now I am about to be beaten by some gross tendril! What did I ever do to deserve this?!'*

Just as the tendril was about to slam into Deidara, a shuriken pieced into it, causing the tendril to jump out of Deidara's hands and into the dark corners of the room in a hasty retreat. Deidara looked up and glared. It was Itachi that saved him from a fate similar to Zetsu's. Itachi's sharingan eyes looked at Deidara and Deidara avoided eye

contact and settled for just glaring at his forehead protector.

From behind Itachi, Sasori walked in, looking very irritated. On the other side of Itachi was Tobi, who looked ready to pee himself.

"Deidara, what you did was completely foolish!" Sasori barked.

"At least I found Zetsu, un," Deidara huffed as he gave Zetsu's body a kick.

"That is not excuse for you to go off on your own!" Sasori scolded. "We are in enemy territory and if I am not mistaken you would have been captured if it weren't for Itachi!"

"Don't you dare go there!" Deidara glared. "I can handle myself!"

"You are trying my patience again!" Sasori growled as he summoned a puppet from one of the scrolls in the sleeves of his Akatsuki cloak. "Do you want me to poison you then leave you here to wither to death?"

"Both of us know that your poisons don't work on me, un!" Deidara spat. "You've poisoned me enough times for me to become immune to them!"

Before either of the opposing artists could make a move, Tobi got in between them with his hands balled up into frightful fists up against his chest.

"Um, can we fight somewhere else, guys?" Tobi asked as he shook like a leaf. "This place is super creepy and I DON'T WANNA DIE HERE!"

Everyone else sweat dropped as Tobi shook Deidara by the cloak, "Senpai, please! Protect me!"

Deidara flinched as his temper beginning to soar even higher. He shot a deadly glare at Tobi as his scarf bunched up in his face. He tried to pry the masked man-child off himself but to no avail.

"Tobi! Get the hell off me, un!" Deidara spat as he rose up his foot and kicked Tobi off of him. "Don't ever do that again!"

Deidara stormed up to Zetsu's limp body and hoisted it up over his shoulder. Without any acknowledgement to the others with him, Deidara went through the doors of the back room and library and headed towards the pulsating membrane that took him to the Upside Down as Will called it. Not the best name for him, but it will do. It probably made more sense to Will as Deidara could infer this was a reflection of that kid's world.

Behind Deidara, Itachi followed quietly, not making a single sound. Sasori dragged Tobi behind them and muttered, "Deidara, you are such a child!"

6. Chapter Six: The Radio

Binas: I am still on a roll here and I am doing fine. I am still working almost four chapters ahead of what is released and I am trying to keep it that way. When I say things are going to get crazy, I mean it.

Like always, please send your feedback and constructive criticism in the review section or by PM if you want to keep it private. I do appreciate the help you guys.

On another note, go on Youtube and listen to the Stranger Things soundtracks as you read. The official music designers Kyle Dixon and Michael Stein have uploaded a ton of the sound tracks and created their own playlists. The music is really good and I think it really highlights various parts of this story.

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Chapter Six: The Radio

The next village was bustling with an even greater amount activity than the last village. Colorful objects were hanging from thick string and wooden posts. Eleven, who had enough strength back to walk, clung close to Jiraiya as she gave a wary look to everything going on. While the crowds made it easier for her to hide in, they also made it easier for any bad men to hide in plain sight. Unlike the last village, she had more caution due to her need for food had been sated.

Jiraiya saw her anxiety and ruffled her short hair.

"Don't worry, kid," Jiraiya said. "I won't let the three of you get hurt or kidnapped."

Eleven nodded a bit, with her brown eyes looking up at Jiraiya. Her eyes still held innocence despite having witnessed bloodshed that was committed by others and herself.

"When you're not being a dirty skirt chaser," Naruto inputted, receiving a pouty glare from Jiraiya.

Sasuke merely crossed his arms, choosing to show his desires to not have someone else protect him. Since Naruto made his comment, Jiraiya did not notice Sasuke's childish sulking.

"Oh be quiet, brat," Jiraiya retorted. "Now, before I teach you anything, I need to go get information on Tsunade's whereabouts. In the meantime, you three can go have fun in the town. Consider it a break from traveling. Also, make sure you three stick together."

Sasuke gave the classic Uchiha grunt as he slipped his hands into the pockets of his black shorts. With the Curse Mark gone, he actually felt a bit happy about the small break, though he would never admit it out loud. While Itachi was still on his mind, he could put it into perspective. I was likely that he would not be running into his older brother super soon. As much it made him a bit sour still, Eleven dealt a huge blow if she managed to make a horrible man like Itachi run away.

Eleven took another look at the town, nervousness still flowed through her body. If everyone else was going to try to have fun, she was going to try to as well. She prayed that no bad men appeared in the town. That would likely cause everyone to get hurt and she would be responsible for endangering them.

Finally, there was Naruto, who was grinning from ear to ear. Out of his back, he brought out a green, stuffed frog. He shook it a bit and rubbed it against his face with a giggle. Sasuke and Eleven just stared at Naruto's childish fixation with different thoughts running through their minds on his wallet as Jiraiya blinked a bit.

"That's quite a lot of money you got there," Jiraiya whistled.

"I've been saving up as much mission money in Froggy as I can!" Naruto proclaimed proudly. "For the rainy days, dattebayo! Well, let's go enjoy ourselves!"

Jiraiya effectively stopped Naruto in his tracks and said, "Whoa, whoa, woah! Share that loot with Sasuke and Eleven, Naruto!"

Jiraiya took Naruto's wallet, making the blonde protest a bit. Jiraiya split up Naruto's money into thirds and gave each of the three their own wad of cash. With that taken care of Jiraiya returned Froggy to Naruto. Naruto shot a look at Jiraiya.

"Don't you know the three Ninja Sins?" Jiraiya asked, seeing the look on Naruto's face.

"No," Naruto said as he shook his head.

Sasuke frowned as Jiraiya said, "These things are what ninjas must abstain from alcohol, money, and women. Men in the case if you are a woman."

Eleven tilted her head a bit, not understanding what each of those three sins were. She did not know what sins were. She had no concept of what money was. She did not know what alcohol was at all, though she heard Papa tell one of the bad men "no drinking alcohol on the job" a few times.

"We aren't even eighteen yet, dattebayo!" Naruto piped up.

"You'd be surprised at all of the crazy things teenagers get themselves into," Jiraiya said quietly before continuing with a normal voice. "Now, you three can go have fun."

With that, Jiraiya walked into the village, with the perfect intelligence destination in mind. Going in another direction, towards the fair, was Eleven, Naruto, and Sasuke.

Once the trio were in the fair, the fun began. Naruto picked the first game, which involved a small wooden ring with a handle and a thin sheet of paper that was hooked on each quadrant of the wooden ring. The objective was to use the small paper holder to catch fish. Naruto immediately fell into trouble when he tried something. The man who was standing there grabbed the blonde's right arm and pointed at a sign that read "No Using Chakra" in big letters. The action startled Eleven, causing her memory of the dango stand to surge forward. Thankfully, Eleven was able to relax when the man released his hold and Naruto and Naruto began trying to catch a fish again. To Eleven's confusion, Sasuke snickered at the misfortune Naruto found himself

in.

"Oh shut it, jerk!" Naruto muttered.

"Hey, at least I read the rules first," Sasuke snarked.

Naruto just glared at Sasuke before going back to trying to catch a fish. Eventually, Naruto was told by the man to give someone else a turn, to which Naruto reluctantly agreed to.

As the trio continued to explore the fair, Eleven came across something familiar in terms of communication in a booth. It was a radio. She rushed up to it, seeing it as her possible only hope at contacting Mike through the haze by the strange energy that filled this world.

"I see you are interested in the radio," a man said as he got up from the seat within the booth. "I have been trying to sell it for a while. Do want to buy it, kiddo? It is only 650 Ryo."

Eleven was stunned by the niceness in the man's voice. None of the less, she asked, "What is 6-5-0 Ryo?"

The man raised an eyebrow after seeing how serious she was. He then said to her, "Ryo is the type of money we use in the Shinobi Nations. And money is used to pay for various things such as that radio. You know how to read and count, right?"

Eleven nodded. From there the man showed her how to pay for the radio. He also told her that it also applies to anything else that requires purchase. He then went on to say that not everything will cost the same amount as the radio did, to which bewildered Eleven. He finally told her that some items could cost up to 1,000 Ryo, which furthered her bewilderment as it sounded like a lot.

After the brief, but effective, lesson on money, Eleven made her first purchase ever. That being the small handheld radio that started the lesson. Eleven held it close, fearing that she may lose her one chance at getting through to Mike and the interference caused by the foreign energy that was everywhere and in everyone but herself.

"What is with the radio?"

Eleven turned to the voice to see Naruto eying it with confusion and curiosity. Behind him was Sasuke, who still seemed to not really care in the slightest about her. Her posture relaxed slightly as her heart rate began to slow to a more normal rhythm.

"Mike," Eleven replied.

"Who or what is Mike?" Naruto asked. "Did you name the radio?"

Eleven shook her head and struggled forming her response, "Mike... is... someone I like."

Naruto's jaw dropped out of surprise. He had never expected such a response. Not helping the surprise was the fact Mike was not a name that the blonde had ever heard of.

Sasuke, on the other hand, merely grunted with an eye roll. He could not care less about romantic love right now and was not sure when he would if ever he wanted to. His fanclub already did an excellent job at ensuring that for a while. They always ruined everything for him when ever they graced him with their presence.

Eleven looked down at the radio as her facial muscles tensed. The two boys watched as blood trickled out of her right nostril. The radio buzzed to life as warpped static eminented from the speakers. Sounds of an adult and dozens of kids speaking gurgled into the static. More blood flowed as a tear slipped out one of Eleven's eyes. Her determination eventually caused the static to clear away more and more as Eleven further strained her psionic powers to hear Mike's voice. She needed to know if he was okay. She needed to have hope that she could return to him. She promised to be with him at the Snow Ball.

"-Radio waves are one of the fascinating types of electromagnetic waves. They are one of the longest waves, but also the slowest-"

Eleven could not identify the man who was speaking. Eventually, she smiled when she heard the voice she was wishing to hear. Shock and awe made itself known on Naruto and Sasuke's faces as the radio continued to project what Eleven wanted it to tune into. As she pushed harder to keep the transmission going, blood began pouring

out of her ears too.

"Mr. Clarke? Do you think radio waves could be used to contact someone super far away? Farther than humanly possible and unreachable?"

"Mike..." Eleven said happily.

She fell to her knees, feeling dizzy and really lightheaded. The radio went from fuzzied talking to pure static in the matter of seconds. It had been so long since Eleven heard Mike talk. She could barely keep herself from crying out loud from sheer joy that came from just hearing him.

Naruto and Sasuke, while having different opinions on Eleven having an obvious crush on this Mike kid, were stunned by what they saw. They had never seen anyone transmitting a conversation in the way Eleven was doing, including the fact she lacked chakra, if at all. It just blew their minds from how crazy and fascinating it was.

'How could she even do that?' Sasuke thought. 'Her lack of chakra already eliminates this being a jutsu. So, what is this ability that she has?'

'Man! This is so cool! How did she do it?' Naruto shouted in his mind. 'I wish I could do something like that! I would listen in on what Pervy Sage is doing right now if I could learn how to do that!'

Eleven was very much out of energy now. She had over exerted her mind and body trying to hear those few seconds of Mike talking and it satisfied her and revealed to her the best news yet. She did not need to use a bath to hear Mike like she had thought days ago. It instilled a sense of hope that she would find a way to Mike and finally be with him as someone who he liked just as much as she liked him. She would be with her friends as she learned more about the world she stepped into when she escaped the bad place. She would be free with not just her friends, but with Mike as well. She would have the freedom that Papa tried to take away from her by locking her away for twelve lonely, sad years.

Before Eleven knew it, she fainted from the exhaustion as her adrenaline plummeted. She landed right on the dirt path with a smile on her lips, clutching the radio tightly to her chest.

"Sasuke!" Naruto called out as he picked up Eleven bridal style. "We need to find Pervy Sage!"

Sasuke huffed a "hn," but nonetheless, he followed Naruto through the village, trying to keep pace with the hyperactive knucklehead.

It had to have been several minutes before they heard drunk laughter. Naruto frowned, recognizing the laugh anywhere. At a time like this, that was the last thing Naruto wanted to suspect.

Naruto entered the building and found Jiraiya laughing along with two women. All three of them were drunk and their money lying everywhere. Naruto set down Eleven carefully at the door and stormed up to Jiraiya.

"Pervy Sage!" Naruto hollered. "What the hell is wrong with you?!"

Jiraiya quickly stopped laughing with the women and looked at Naruto. A sweat drop ran down the side of his head.

"You told us the Ninja Sins and here you are breaking all three of them at once! I can't believe it, dattebayo!" Naruto continued. "I was hoping you would be actually looking for information because Eleven just passed out! Why can't you just keep your mind off perverted stuff for once?!"

Before Jiraiya could respond, Naruto shut his eyes and punched something. Or rather someone.

"Oh boy..." Jiraiya deadpanned.

"What's your problem, pipsqueak?"

Naruto cringed in embarrassment as he turned around to face the person who he had punched. He was much taller and was clearly drunk. Any angry drunk to be completely correct. Naruto backed away outside as the man pulled out a knife. Sasuke looked up and looked at Naruto with a "what did you just do" kind of look on his face. Eleven was still unconscious on the ground.

"Heh, you are going to pay for that, runt," The man slurred as he made the movements necessary to stab Naruto.

Just before the knife hit Naruto, Jiraiya stepped in, blocking the man's attack.

"Alright Naruto, pay attention," Jiraiya said with a confident smile. "This is what you're going to be learning!"

Chakra colleessed itself into a spiralling sphere in Jiraiya's right hand. It grew to the size of a palm-sized ball before becoming opaque. With a shout of "Rasengan," the sphere collided with the angry, drunken man. The man was hurdled a great distance away, damaging a booth behind him, causing people to yelp with fright from a man suddenly falling into the stand.

The drunk man looked up in fear at Jiraiya and said in a stuttering, fear filled voice, "Y...your Ji...Jiraiya of the Legendary Sannin!"

The drunk man promptly threw his wallet at Jiraiya and ran away as fast as he could. Jiraiya took some money out of it and gave it to the store vender that was affected by the drunk man falling into his stand.

"Sorry about that," Jiraiya apologized. "I hope that covers the expenses. Oh, and can you grab some rubber balls and water balloons?"

"Thank you," the vender said with a courteous bow and handed what Jiraiya asked for over, to which Jiraiya passed on to Naruto. "It will cover them all, and here you go."

"That was so cool, dattebayo!" Naruto shouted elatedly. "And I'm going to be learning it!"

"Hn," Sasuke grunted. "It looks less powerful than the Chidori."

"Oh screw you! When I learn the Rasengan, I am going to kick your ass with it!"

"In your dreams, loser."

Before Naruto could pipe out another insult, Jiraiya stepped in, pushed Sasuke and Naruto apart. He said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa! Time out! You two need to stop butting heads like that. The Rasengan and

the Chidori are not jutsu for childish competitions. They are both high level jutsu that are very dangerous and can cause someone to get killed with the right amount of power and control. Promise me that you both won't use either of them on each other in any manner you two were just thinking. Got it?"

Naruto and Sasuke shoot glares at each other and grumbled, "We promise."

"Good," Jiraiya said. "Now, let's get Eleven and head to where I will train you Naruto. Sasuke, I am not a lightning style user, but I do have a summon who can help you train your fire style jutsu. Just so you don't slack off. I have a feeling that Kakashi might have passed that onto you."

Sasuke let out a snort as his form of a remark. He did not think that Kakashi's laziness passing onto him was possible in the slightest. He was only late to the Chunin Exams because Kakashi had to make a private errand for "a short while" on the way to the arena. He was stuck with waiting for him to finish.

Without further ado, Jiraiya went over to Eleven and saw all of the blood on her face. He narrowed his eyes a bit in curiosity. He wiped some of the blood away from her nose and ears with his thumb.

"How did she get such a massive nosebleed and bleeding in her ears, Naruto?" Jiraiya asked as he turned around.

"Oh, she was straining herself, making her new radio go haywire until she tuned the radio in to these two people, Mr. Clarke and her boyfriend, Mike, talking."

"Damn," Jiraiya whistled before turning back to Eleven. "A bit young there."

"Seriously?!" Naruto exasperated. "She did something weird with a radio and you find her having a boyfriend more interesting?! You're such a little perv-!"

"A *super* pervert, kiddo!" Jiraiya corrected as he picked up Eleven. "I do have standards. I like my women to be young *adults*. Eleven is way

too young. I am most certainly not a pedophile and nor do I ever want to be seen as one. Now, come on kids, let's go find a nice spot to begin training."

Pein overlooked Zetsu's autopsy. His face casted with little emotion at the sight of the deceased Akatsuki member. Despite not showing it, he was mourning the loss of the one who made assassination missions less messy and cleaned up Hidan's ritual leftovers quite nicely.

"Shall Kakuzu and I begin?" Sasori asked, his face covered by a surgical mask. "I hate to be kept waiting."

Kakuzu snorted in agreement. He did not have the impatience of Sasori, but time was money and he did not want to waste time that he could be using to build up the Akatsuki's treasuries.

"You may begin," Pein said, backing away to Konan's side.

With a curt nod, Sasori made the first incision and said, "I need you to pin down the skin tissue as I go."

Out of Kakuzu's finger came a long sewing tendril. As Sasori made the vivisection cuts, Kakuzu pinned down the tissue as directed.

Sasori cut further into Zetsu's corpse, moving around the insides until he came to a swollen mass of white tissue. Thinking nothing was out of the ordinary so far, Sasori began cutting into the swollen tissue as Kakuzu began peeling the massive amount of tissue back.

What came out was startling. Not one, not two, but three little quadrupeds the size of house cats popped out of Zetsu's corpse. They chirped and yawned as everyone stared at the alien creatures in shock and awe. The one on the right waged its reptilian-esque tail as if it were a playful dog and pounced on Sasori with surprising force before bouncing on to the ground. Sasori's glare moved from the creature that ran down the hall to the one that stayed behind to munch on Zetsu's corpse. The second creature faced Sasori, sensing the red head's glare and opened its mouth, which bloomed like a flower. It let out a loud chirp before going back to eating Zetsu's body while the third one remained nestled in Zetsu's innards, burping with

content.

"Oi!" Hidan's voice carried through the Akatsuki headquarters. "Just what the hell is this freaky thing?! Gah! That's my sandal, you little shit!"

Kakuzu sighed. Of all the members in the Akatsuki, the first strange creature had to annoy Hidan.

7. Chapter Seven: The Training

Binas: Sorry for the super long wait. My reasons are the following:

1) The chapter that I am currently on is being a pain to write. So now, I only have a three chapter buffer between the released chapter and the chapter I am working on from scratch. This is not accounting for tune ups that I make to the chapters that are slated to be released next. I want to ensure you guys get the best quality of writing that I am capable of producing. I am doing my best to make sure no garbage of any kind interferes with your guys' enjoyment.

2) School started back up yesterday. It is currently looking like an unexpected, heavy work load judging by the *seven hours* worth of Macroeconomics *assignments*. That will be followed up by any programming assignments from Computer Organization I that I might have, almost 30 page readings of various literature and essays, any assignments from my student-to-real life classes for those with autism, any assignments from my Introduction to Theater. I will write when I can.

For those who found that a mouth full:

Just know that ahead of time I maybe swamped depending on which class decides to be the heavy work load winner and runner up and that I am working as much and hard as I can to give you the best that I can do.

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Chapter Seven: The Training

Eleven stirred to the sound of Naruto struggling with something and Sasuke shouting out something weird like "Fire Style: Fireball Jutsu." As her vision cleared, she realized that she was no longer in the festival. She looked around and saw that her radio was next to her. She smiled in relief that she did not lose it. It would have been bad if

she did.

Aside from the radio, Eleven saw that she was lying against a tree with a lightly sleeping Jiraiya on the other side of the tree, resting with a giant bottle in his lap. In the giant bottle was a liquid that smelled like a mixture of something rather bad and sour to her. Whatever it was, it was not good for her to drink judging by smell alone.

Eleven got up and grabbed her radio as quietly as she could. With it tucked to her chest behind her crossed arms, she slowly and silently walked off by herself. Her objective was to find a body of water, which was surprisingly not too hard as she found one only a little over thirty meters.

In front of her was a small, shallow, crystal clear, blue pond of water with tall grass and light purple wildflowers lining its rim. Its depth was comparable to the pool that her friends made a bath out of for her to use. The aroma of the air was very much relaxing as she took a large amount of air in through her nose and out her mouth.

Reaching into her jacket's pocket, she pulled out the taped up goggles that Joyce gave her. They looked a bit dirty with the droplets of syrup and Upside Down goo and spores. Eleven dipped the goggles into the pond and wiped the goggles clean of the debris that covered them.

Once the taped up goggles were clean, Eleven slipped them onto her forehead and set the radio by pond's edge as she slipped off her shoes and socks and began placing her bare feet in the pond. Inch by inch, Eleven slipped into the pond. She shivered as her toes were hit by the temperature of the cool water, but she pressed forward, heading towards the middle. She slipped the goggles over her eyes and slowly fell backwards so that she would float. Despite the pond lacking salt, she still floated. She was just having to work slightly harder to keep herself afloat on her back. Eleven took a deep breath and began to focus. She made the radio go static, as Mike called the fuzzy sounds, using it to boost her powers so that she could overcome the foreign energy that filled this world. She was not sure if the static would work like she wanted it to, but she was not going to let that stop her from trying.

Suddenly, Eleven found herself in her mental void, what Papa told her it was called. She walked in the one centimeter deep, invisible water floor, searching around. She saw Naruto and Jiraiya talking about hair growth direction, which made her unconsciously touch her own head's hair stubble. Moving forward, she saw Sasuke spitting out fire and heard him talking to someone, but that person's presence was not visible to her.

Seeing as she was still around the pond's location in her mind, she pressed further with her powers. This time she saw the small blanket fort she had lived in for a week at Mike's house. Tears streamed from both eyes as she smiled and ran up into it. She could feel the fabric and interact with its pisonic version in her mind. It was just as soft as she remembered.

Then she saw Mike, he had appeared in the blanket tent with her. She was overwhelmed by sensations of relief, happiness, and something else. The same feeling she had when his lips meet her's. It was a wonderful mix of emotions. She never wanted them to end.

"Mike," Eleven said joyfully as she touched Mike's shoulder.

Mike looked upwards slowly, becoming aware of her mental contact to him. He asked in breathy voice, "Eleven?" Eleven smiled brightly in response to hearing Mike say her name.

Mike, too, had huge smile the very next second and hugged her, "El! I missed you so much!"

"I missed you," Eleven parroted the words, but the feelings and emotions behind the words were very much real.

"What happened to you?" Mike asked as tears began to prick his eyes. "I have been trying to reach you for-"

"Four-zero days," Eleven counted in her own way. The number of days it was since she disappeared. "Not strong enough."

"You didn't have a radio or something?" Mike asked to which Eleven nodded. "Where are you?"

"Weird place," Eleven said making a face that Mike could tell that she

was confused.

"Weird is better than bad, right?" Mike asked.

"Like home, but weird," Eleven continued. "Light. Warm. Weird people. People look like us. Like me. Not from bad place."

Mike nodded and clarified, "So you are somewhere where there are humans that have powers like you do but they are not from a lab?"

"Yes," Eleven confirmed.

"Wow," Mike laughed a bit. "That sounds so cool! I wish I could see it!"

Eleven grasped Mike's hand and he got up. Together, they walked in the void. She brought his mind to the mental presence of Naruto and touched Naruto's shoulder. She said, "Naruto."

Naruto blinked a bit as he became aware of Eleven's telepathy. He turned around and saw Eleven and Mike in a black void. Upon seeing them in the Mental Void, Naruto gave a startled yelp as he jumped a bit with a small jerk in his movements.

"Hi, I am Mike Wheeler," Mike introduced himself as he stuck his free hand out to shake Naruto's.

Naruto got over his surprise rather quickly and gave a huge grin, "I am Naruto Uzumaki! So you're the guy Eleven was trying to use the radio for! That was a really cool thing she did! I want to learn how she did that!"

"El is a psychic," Mike said proudly as he stopped holding hands to place an arm around Eleven's shoulders. "And she is the most amazing girl I have ever met."

"He likes me," Eleven said brightly with blush appearing on her face.

"Yeah..." Mike trailed off, blush decorating his cheeks too.

Mike could feel the love, loyalty, and admiration that Eleven felt for him. It was so touching and shared by his own his own heart. It did

not feel as embarrassing for his love for Eleven to be made known this time around, especially in comparison to when his own sister brought it up. Older sisters talking about their younger brothers' girlfriends to them will always be gross to him.

"So, is this Eleven's mind?" Naruto asked as he looked around. "It looks really dark."

"It's like Professor X's mind when he is using his telepathy to find and talk to people." Mike said, gaining confused looks from both Eleven and Naruto. "Professor X is a character from the X-Men comics I read with the others, Dustin Henderson, Lucas Sinclair, and Will Byers. The comic books are really good. We all like reading them and trading them."

"Wow!" Naruto whistled. "Can any of those characters make Shadow Clones?"

"Multiple Man, also known as James Madrox, can, but they are called duplicates and are not made of shadows," Mike said, not entirely getting the term "Shadow Clone." "Multiple Man first appeared in 1975 in *Giant Size Fantastic Four, issue four*."

Naruto beamed, despite not knowing what the X-Men and Fantastic Four were as characters and effectively ignoring the fact Mike did not understand what Shadow Clones were. However, he could tell that comic books were probably from something like manga judging by the word "book." That, or a magazine.

"That sounds really cool!" Naruto exclaimed, causing both Eleven and Mike to flinch from how loud Naruto got. "So, where are you from?"

"Another world," Mike said with a geeky grin. "Now that is probably one of the most mental things I have ever wanted to say."

Naruto went wide eyes with excitement. He might not have known what the word mental meant as slang, but he could definitely say one thing, "That is so cool!"

"When the other world is not a decaying dump of a place, then yeah," Mike said, gaining a confused look from Naruto. "Our world is not

decaying. Just, another world that Will has been to is. We call it the Upside Down because that is what El named it."

Eleven gave a sad nod. The Upside Down was really unpleasant. The way it functioned and behaved was akin to her and Mike's home world, but the way it was deep down was very disturbing.

"What is the Upside Down like aside from gross?" Naruto asked.

"Cold. Dark. Scary," Eleven said in a frightened tone as brief images of it flashed into her mind. The memories came to her at a frightening speed, making her clutch Mike's hand tighter.

Naruto gave a concerned look as Mike comforted Eleven. Whatever had happened in that place had to have been bad. He imagined the Upside Down as an abyss with no light, reversed gravity, and a unrelenting blast of cold, frigid air that was full of ghosts. The product of his mind sent shivers down his spine within seconds of being conjured up.

"It's okay, El," Mike said, holding Eleven close. "You aren't there, neither is Will. And the Demogorgon is dead, so we're all safe."

"The Demogorgon?" Naruto, coming back to his senses, and with a scrunched up face he asked. "Is that some sort of nasty fungus?"

Mike shook his head as he stroked Eleven's head, "No. It's this monster with a petal mouth and no face. It can rip holes from its world into our's whenever it wants to. It is also super tall and strong. The Demogorgon is what kidnapped Will and took him to the Upside Down. Eleven killed it by disintegrating it and it did something to her in return. I don't know what, but I don't care. It hurt Will and almost got Dustin, Lucas, Eleven, and I."

Mike continued to hug Eleven close and said to her, "I am so glad you're alive."

Naruto smiled as they hugged, the bond between Mike and Eleven was touching despite the crazy circumstances that he did not really understand other than the two were separated by two different worlds. How that worked, Naruto also did not know, but it was filed

under "Whatever" in his mind. He was just glad two friends were able to be together again for the moment. At that moment, Naruto began to fade from the mental void. He was shocked as his vision flashed between Eleven's mental void and the real world. Once he was gone, Mike released Eleven from his hug and held both of her hands.

"Please stay safe, El," Mike said with some tears in his eyes. "I wish you were really here."

"Snow Ball?" Eleven asked.

"Don't worry about it," Mike said, a small smile gracing his lips. "There will be another one next year. Even if you can't make it to it, that is alright. I understand that finding a way back is definitely not easy."

"Gate?"

"You could, but didn't that really exhaust you? I mean, judging by the other usages of your powers."

"Yes. I could get..."

"Stronger?" Mike filled in for Eleven's silent pause, to which Eleven nodded. "Just practice. The more you practice, the stronger you will be. Soon you will be able to open a gate home without a problem. Your powers are like your muscles. The more you use them, the stronger they become."

Eleven nodded again and quietly said as she then hugged Mike, "I like you, Mike."

"It's supposed to be 'I love you,' but that doesn't matter." Mike said with a slight chuckle as he hugged back. "I love you too, El."

With that Mike planted a small, quickish kiss on Eleven's lips, making them both blush a bit.

Mike said, "I wish you luck."

Eleven let loose happy tears as Mike began to fade from her mind's void. She would get stronger. Not just for herself, but to return to her

friends and Mike. She had nothing to lose by doing so. She will return home to Mike and her friends.

Eleven left the void and orientated herself upright in the pond. She slipped off her goggles to see Jiraiya standing right in front of her.

"I found Mike," Eleven said with a grin.

Jiraiya restrained himself from making a perverted joke the best he could and asked with a slightly perverted smile, "And what?"

'They hugged and kissed,' he thought. 'Now, keep yourself together. Don't say something that Tsunade would flip over to an innocent little girl.'

"I know how to get home," Eleven said climbing out of the pond.

"Oh, you do?" Jiraiya asked, surprised by the response. "What's your plan?"

"Open a gate," Eleven responded as she tapped her mind as she began struggling to find words to follow afterwards. "I am not... strong... strong..."

"You aren't strong enough to open the gate home?" Jiraiya asked, to which Eleven nodded. "Naruto, he was pretty quick about it too, he did tell me a bit about what you and your boyfriend told him."

Eleven nodded. She may not know what a boyfriend was, but she could guess by how Jiraiya called Mike her boyfriend. So, from there, she decided to shelve that question and ask, "How do I get strong... with practice?"

"I suggest you being training. It won't be easy and could take hundreds of sessions over the course of several months to produce big improvements, but it is the best method," Jiraiya said. "Training is basically doing what you know and pushing yourself to build up your stamina. Stamina is energy that your body uses to keep moving. The less you have, the more tired you become. Training will drain it, but you need to use that to see if you have trained hard enough or not. Doing it right would be to the point you are tired but you can still move."

Eleven absorbed all that she was told about training and nodded, "When do I train?"

"Daily is ideal," Jiraiya said. "Now, do you want to begin today or wait until we get back to the village?"

"Now."

Jiraiya smiled at the determination on Eleven's face. She had the mentality of a ninja who wanted to keep in top shape. Out of the small band of four, her determination to train was like Sasuke and Naruto's. She had a burning fire in her brown eyes, which were set on doing everything that she could to get home.

'To Mike, heheee. Now get your mind out of the gutter,' Jiraiya thought.

Outside the festival village a short time later...

"Now since you lack chakra, we will have to adjust your training a bit," Jiraiya said with his arms crossed. "Do you know how to do any exercises?"

Eleven shook her head no.

"Okay, watch closely," Jiraiya said getting into the grass with his palms holding the ground and lowered himself to be really close to the ground before going back up. "This is how you do push ups."

Jiraiya then got up and began jumping in place with his stretched out arms and legs making arcs, "Jumping Jacks."

He then laid down with his knees bent and began sitting up with his arms crossed just to go back down, "And sit ups."

Jiraiya got off the ground and smiled, "I know that they don't sound related to your powers, but they will build that stamina I was talking about. I want you to do fifteen of each, with no powers. If you feel like you can do more, repeat the amount of each. Got it, kid?"

Eleven nodded in understanding.

"Now begin," Jiraiya said with a clap.

With that, Eleven went on all fours and began attempting her first set of push ups, literally. The struggle was hitting her within the first eight push ups, but just Jiraiya said, she had to use that pain to get stronger. If feeling a bit sore meant the training was working and she had to continue to train for months to make the improvements to her stamina better, then she would persevere through it. She will do it for herself and for those who care about her. She would do it for Mike. She will not let any of them down. Not now when they clearly wanted their friend back from where ever the Demogorgon banished her to in its last few seconds of life.